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ABSTRACT

This guidebook presents a variety of dropout prevention strategies and is intended to help readers determine which strategies are best suited for a particular classroom, school, or district. The primary audience is school personnel who work with young adolescents. It begins by addressing major dropout issues, primary research findings, and possible solutions. Three additional concepts are then presented: bonding, basic skills, and youth advocacy. These topics relative to bonding are explored: classroom and school climate, various school policies (attendance and truancy, suspension, nonpromotion and retention, discipline, tracking and testing), and the roles of parents, families, and the community. These basic skills topics are then discussed: curriculum concerns, instructional issues, teaching/learning styles, career awareness and educational planning, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and the role of vocational education. Specific issues featured in the discussion of youth advocacy are adolescent behavior, expectations of youth, early identification of potential dropouts, building self-esteem, guidance and counseling, and accommodation. The monograph concludes with a discussion of planning and evaluation techniques, staffing patterns and staff development, the role of administrators, and overview of choices that teachers, counselors, and principals should consider in developing dropout prevention strategies. A list of 145 references concludes the guide. (YLB)

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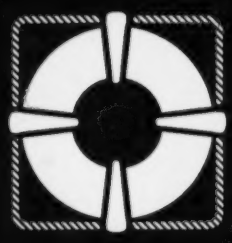

DROPOUT PREVENTION SERIES

The School's Choice:
Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School

CE 050 889

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THE SCHOOL'S CHOICE: GUIDELINES FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION AT THE MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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He who destroys one life, it is as
though he destroyed the entire world;
while he who sustains one life, it is
as though he sustained the entire world.

--The Talmud

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FOREWORD

As the authors of this monograph are quick to point out, dropping out of school is not the result of an isolated incident. Rather, it is the result of an accumulation of factors that weigh so heavily on the student that no other alternative seems possible. Individual dropout patterns--which often manifest themselves at the beginning of the high school years--are well developed before the student reaches the 9th or 10th grade. Dropout prevention strategies, therefore, must begin at the middle and junior high school levels during the period when young adolescents are beginning to make decisions that will greatly affect their ability and desire to remain in school.

The National Center--in response to this problem--has developed a comprehensive package to provide students, teachers, administrators, and counselors with materials focusing on dropout prevention issues and vocational-technical education's role in addressing those issues. This school resource and the supportive classroom materials address the concepts of bonding as a means of helping students reach their potential, integration of basic and vocational skills as a means of providing relevant in-school experiences, and advocacy as a means of ensuring student success.

Sincere appreciation is particularly due to the following persons who reviewed the preliminary draft: Dr. Jan McTiernan, Coordinator of Project COFFEE, North Oxford, Massachusetts; Dr. John V. Hamby, Acting Director, National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University; Dr. Ida M. Halasz, Director of the National Academy at the National Center for Research in Vocational Education; and Dr. Betty L. Rider, Research Specialist, National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

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Ray D. Ryan
Executive Director
The National Center for Research
in Vocational Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary intent of *The School's Choice: Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School* is to present a wide variety of program options so that the target audience--teachers, counselors, and principals--can determine which ones are best suited for a particular classroom, school, or district. The reader is asked to "sort out" the many choices or alternatives and determine which apply and which appeal to them. A second purpose is to stimulate a series of dialogues among teachers, counselors, principals in the same school, district, and other schools and districts. Still another purpose is to encourage introspection on the part of the reader. In short, the guidebook is intended to provide information and insights, specifics, and action planning guidelines so that full-fledged strategies can be developed.

The guidebook addresses a number of questions beginning with major dropout issues, the primary relevant research findings, and possible solutions to the problems. Three additional concepts are then presented: bonding, basic skills, and youth advocacy.

The following topics, relative to bonding, are explored in depth: classroom and school climate, various school policies (attendance and truancy, suspension, nonpromotion and retention, discipline, tracking and testing), and the roles of parents, families, and the community.

The following basic skills topics are discussed: curriculum concerns, instructional issues, teaching/learning styles, career awareness and educational planning, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and--most important--the role of vocational education.

A number of specific issues are featured in the discussion of the concept of youth advocacy including adolescent behavior, expectations of youth, early identification of potential dropouts, building self-esteem, guidance and counseling, and the related concept of accommodation.

The monograph concludes with a probing discussion of planning and evaluation techniques, staffing patterns and staff development, the role of administrators, and an overview of the choices--options--which teachers, counselors, and principals should consider in developing dropout prevention strategies.

PROLOGUE

What Are the Purposes of This Guidebook?

Our primary purpose is to present a wide variety of dropout prevention strategies and to help readers determine which strategies are best suited for a particular classroom, school, or district. This is why we have called the guidebook *The School's Choice*.

A second purpose is to stimulate dialogue among teachers, counselors, and principals in the same school, within a district, and in other schools and districts and to encourage them to reflect on their roles, collectively and individually, in actively addressing the dropout problem. The guidebook is designed to provide information and action planning guidelines that will lead to dropout prevention strategies tailor-made for the school or school district.

We have attempted to be realistic in our recommendations--not adopting an overly optimistic or pessimistic stance. Further, we have attempted to synthesize a great amount of research on this topic while focusing on areas that school personnel have some control to facilitate change at a viable, local level. Global issues, therefore, are downplayed.

The sheer mass of information written about the dropout problem is staggering. We hope, however, that this synthesis will stimulate group discussion, promote creative solutions, and encourage readers' further exploration. Because we desire to make this guidebook a useful tool, numerous lists and exhibits are included to allow easier customization of strategies to complement effective school programs.

For Whom Is the Guidebook Intended?

The guidebook is for everyone who works and lives with young adolescents, specifically middle and junior high school teachers, counselors, principals, parents, and others in the community who might be involved in dropout prevention programs. Because of the needed articulation with other levels, discussions with elementary and secondary school teachers are recommended. The primary audience, however, is school personnel who work with young adolescents. Poor attitudes and behaviors often become firmly established and "potential" dropouts begin to become "real" statistics among this age group.

WHAT ARE THE DIMENSIONS OF THE DROPOUT PROBLEM?

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WHAT ARE THE DIMENSIONS OF THE DROPOUT PROBLEM?

The Major Issues

Individual dropout patterns are well developed before students reach the 9th or 10th grade. Dropout prevention strategies, therefore, must begin during the period when young adolescents are making choices that will greatly affect their ability and desire to remain in school. Before we can keep our students in school, we must look closely at the motivation and methods for doing so.

In order to plan our strategies effectively we must consider four basic problems: disparities in funding between poor and affluent communities, the achievement gap between white and minority students, the inadequacy of current programs that prepare students for work, and the large numbers of students who drop out or fail to progress (Edelman 1986).

There is little consensus among statisticians regarding the dropout rate. Estimates range from 15 percent to 50 percent. For example, Sechler and Crowe (1986) report that at least 25 percent of the approximately 14 million students in high school will drop out. In some schools, they note, the dropout rate is 40 percent or higher. Although the statistics vary, one of the most shocking comes from the Education Commission of the States (1985), which reports that every year approximately 700,000 students drop out. Nationally, one of four students does not graduate; in inner cities approximately one of two fails to complete high school. For Native American and some Hispanic students, the dropout rate is higher--about 85 percent of urban Native Americans and 70 percent to 80 percent of Puerto Ricans.

The U.S. General Accounting Office (1986) also reports estimates. They indicate that various national surveys provide educational progress information from different youth samples. School district records must be viewed with some skepticism because the information is not always complete. For example, the GAO report cites, from the Current Population Survey, that in 1985 there were about 4.3 million dropouts ages 16-24. Of these about 3.5 million were white, about 700,000 black, and about 100,000 were other races. Fourteen percent of youth ages 18-19 were dropouts--16 percent were young men and 12 percent were young women. Another survey--High School and Beyond--shows that the dropout rate for youth from households with low-income, low-skill wage earners with limited educational backgrounds was about three times the rate of youth from the highest end of the socioeconomic scale (22 percent vs. 7 percent). Table 1 shows the state-by-state dropout rate for 2 recent years.

The costs--financial and otherwise--and the consequences to youth of dropping out are staggering. Sheppard (1986) reports that the cost of high school dropouts, ages 25-34, conservatively amounts to $77 billion every year: $71 billion in lost tax revenues, $3 billion for welfare and unemployment, $3 billion for crime prevention.

TABLE 1

STATE-BY-STATE DROPOUT RATES

State	1982	1984	Rank	State	1982	1984	Rank
Alabama	36.6	37.9	3	Montana	21.3	17.9	44
Alaska	36.5	25.3	27 T*	Nebraska	18.1	13.7	50 T
Arizona	36.6	35.4	11 T	Nevada	35.2	33.5	12
Arkansas	26.6	24.8	30 T	New Hamp.	23.0	24.8	30 T
California	39.9	36.8	8	New Jersey	23.5	22.3	38
Colorado	29.1	24.6	31	New Mexico	30.6	29.0	17
Conn.	29.4	20.9	41	New York	36.6	37.8	5 T
Deleware	25.3	28.9	18	N. Carol.	32.9	30.7	15
D.C.	43.1	44.8	1	N. Dakota	16.1	13.7	50 T
Florida	39.8	37.8	5 T	Ohio	22.5	20.0	42
Georgia	35.0	36.9	7	Oklahoma	29.2	26.9	21 T
Hawaii	25.1	26.8	22	Oregon	27.5	26.1	23
Idaho	25.6	24.2	32	Penn.	24.0	22.8	37 T
Illinios	23.9	25.5	25	Rhode Island	27.3	31.3	14
Indiana	28.3	23.0	35	S. Carol.	37.4	35.5	9
Iowa	15.9	14.0	48	S. Dakota	17.3	14.5	47
Kansas	19.3	18.3	43	Tennessee	32.2	29.5	16
Kentucky	34.1	31.6	13	Texas	36.4	35.4	11 T
Louisiana	38.5	43.3	2	Utah	25.0	21.3	40
Maine	37.9	22.8	37 T	Vermont	20.4	16.9	45
Maryland	25.2	22.2	39	Virginia	26.2	25.3	27 T
Mass.	23.6	25.7	24	Wash.	23.9	24.9	28
Michigan	28.4	27.8	19	W. Va.	33.7	26.9	21 T
Minnesota	11.8	10.7	51	Wisconsin	16.9	15.5	46
Miss.	38.7	37.6	6	Wyoming	27.6	24.0	33
Missouri	25.8	23.8	34	Average	30.0	29.1	--

*T = a tied ranking

SOURCE: Ortlovensky 1986.

Approximately $240 billion is lost in earnings and foregone taxes over the life of each year's class of dropouts. Billions are spent on crime control, welfare, health care, and other social services. It is estimated that every $1 spent on early prevention and intervention can save $4.75 in the costs of remedial education, welfare, and crime further down the road (*Education Daily* January 1987).

Dropping out, therefore, does not end the problems for students who are not succeeding in school. For high school dropouts, labor market opportunities are exceedingly poor. Their unemployment rates are higher than those of their graduating counterparts, and they are less likely to seek work. Dropouts who are employed have

lower earnings are more likely to be in semiskilled jobs and are in lower quality jobs with poorer working conditions.

The employment situation for black dropouts apparently is even more bleak now than it was 20 years ago. The unemployment rate for black youth has risen since the 1950s and continues to rise. In 1972, the unemployment rate for black youth was 35 percent; it rose to 43 percent in 1986. For white youth, the unemployment rate was much lower--14 percent in 1972 and up only slightly to 16 percent in 1986 (U.S. General Accounting Office 1986). The problem affects everyone. How we respond will help determine whether or not we create a permanent second class of citizens.

What the Research Says

We are fortunate to have a growing body of research on both dropout prevention and middle-level education. However, Johnston and Markle (1986) call attention to the problem that practice often is "squarely at odds" with what research claims should be done. This occurs because no systematic mechanism exists for putting research findings into the hands of school personnel. Moreover, the findings are seldom in a form that can be readily used. Also, when the findings are presented, they are often given as prescriptions for behavior rather than as information to aid good professional judgment.

Johnston and Markle also recognize that it is the practitioner who must ultimately decide what is to be done on a daily basis and that those decisions are best made with attention to what we know as a profession, even if what we know is not consistent. Nonetheless, they argue that even though research may yield nonconclusive information and even though some findings may seem to conflict, this does not detract from its value. They cite other research that suggests that the realization that some findings may conflict enhances the fact that all these findings must be viewed as a whole and that decisions must be made about the kinds of things that are most likely to impact locally.

There is no single factor that will predict who is likely to drop out. However, the two most critical variables appear to be low academic achievement and behavioral problems.

One very interesting finding is that some limited evidence exists that dropping out has a positive effect on the psychosocial functioning of dropout-prone adolescents. Elliot and Voss (1974) found that although youths who eventually dropped out of school were more delinquent than nondropout youths, the dropout youths' delinquency decreased once they left school. From this, the researchers suggest that negative experiences at school may have contributed to the delinquency of dropouts while they were still in school.

An interesting dichotomy can be seen in the various research analyses, namely, whether the focus for dropout prevention should be on "school improvement" or "student correction" strategies. We need to work on both dimensions. Nevertheless, the illusion often persists that there is something grossly wrong with some young adolescents today--lack of motivation, discipline, proper attitudes. However, we often overlook

the institutions they attend. Are our schools responsive, or are they assaultive, rejecting? Also, we have to be alert to "educational reforms" that divert our attention from unjust social and economic arrangements. Since the problems are multidimensional, the solutions also need to be. Transition to the future begins as young adolescents leave our middle and junior high schools and continue through high school until work is established as a major life activity. A most important barrier to our effectiveness in helping students lay the foundations for future transitions is the lack of systematic strategies that enable students to make these transitions smoothly.

Major findings from the research and the literature relating to the dropout issues are presented in exhibits 1, 2, and 3 and table 2.

The actual reasons for dropping out of school are manifold. The reasons for dropping out in Appalachia, for example, are summarized in table 2. These findings appear to be applicable elsewhere as they are the reasons that show up in the research.

In general, the reasons often are low academic achievement, dislike of school, expulsion or suspension, economic reason, pregnancy, and marriage. Academically related reasons include the fact that dropouts often find it virtually impossible to compete; often there is dissonance between their learning styles and the teaching/curriculum styles; the environment has alienated them; they see the school climate as hostile; and often a value conflict exists between them and their schools. Moreover, often there are inordinate academic pressures on them. Family-related reasons point toward such matters as family pressures, negative attitudes toward education, and economics. The work-related reasons often include support of one's birth family or one's own young wife and child. Research also shows that very intensive work involvement is associated with higher rates of dropping out. In addition, some observers suggest that minority students particularly drop out at high rates because their experience in poverty leads them to reject the widely held belief that greater education leads to employment and a guaranteed income.

Fine and Rosenberg (1983) conclude that empirical data demonstrate that many who leave school are "keenly aware of the contradictions between their academic learning and lived experiences, critical of the meritocratic ideology promoted in their schools, and cognizant of race/class/gender discrimination both in school and in the labor force" (p. 259).

Dropouts, they believe, either are "resisters" (that is, youth who are unwilling to accommodate a "hidden curriculum" that fails to meet their needs) or "informants" (that is, youth who also are aware of the contradictions of one of our major social institutions--schools).

Possible Solutions

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (1986)--a unit of the National Education Association--postulates that (1) the sooner we intervene with students at-risk, the better are their chances of success and (2) the classroom level is the essential focal point for effective dropout prevention programs. The U.S. General Accounting Office (1986) also reports that students who drop out before the 10th grade are less likely to return or enroll in supplementary or remedial programs.

EXHIBIT 1

MAJOR FINDINGS ABOUT STUDENTS, CLASSROOMS, AND FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

About Students

- Noncompleters are characterized by their having lower expectations, lower achievement/ability, and lower grades than completers.
- Noncompleters differ from completers in terms of their inability to function adequately in the social context of schooling (i.e., high truancy, discipline problems, tardiness).
- Dropouts are characterized by greater feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness than students who have remained in schools.
- Major correlates of dropping out include being 2 or more years behind grade level and having relatively little knowledge of the labor market.
- Higher levels of educational aspirations reduce the likelihood of dropping out of school.
- Dropouts have poorly defined goals and generally lower occupational aspirations than other youth their age.
- Dropouts lack self-esteem, especially as related to school performance, have generally low feelings of personal efficacy, have a low need for self-development and improvement, and lack a commitment to social values.
- Helping adolescents set realistic goals, monitor progress, and achieve significant recognition for their improvement are activities that have been linked to a reduction in school dropouts.

About Classrooms

- Dropouts tend to be resentful of authority and see the institution's discipline system as both ineffective and unfair.
- In addition to such factors as low classroom grades, grade failure, and negative school attitudes, delinquent behavior in the junior high school years was a powerful prediction of dropping out.
- Academic classes that used minimal structure and high flexibility, coupled with individualized teaching and counseling to improve self-image and academic achievement, have been shown to reduce the dropout rate.
- Students tend to absent themselves from classes that were high in competition and teacher control and from classes that they perceive as low in teacher support. Apparently, classes that are more rule-oriented than person-oriented have more school truants.
- Other students who leave school have a history of academic failure, truancy, poor attendance, and suspension from school for behavioral problems.
- Learning style preferences of dropouts reveal that these students were strongly peer- and teacher-oriented but also preferred variety in the learning environment, required mobility and were unable to sit still for long periods of time, were easily bored by daily routines and highly structured learning requirements, and viewed tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory perceptions as the strongest modalities in the learning process.
- Characteristics commonly found among youth who are potential or actual dropouts are the lack of participation in extracurricular activities, isolation from school peers, their friends are not school-oriented, social isolation, and the lack of school integration (social ties that contribute to members' attachment to a group and willingness to conform to norms and expectations).
- The major instigating forces in dropouts are academic failure and alienation from the school.

About Teachers

- Teachers who are flexible, positive, creative, and person-centered, rather than rule- and procedure-centered, stand a better chance of interrupting the cycle of failure and alienation that leads to dropping out.
- Many dropouts tend to perceive little interest, caring, or acceptance on the part of teachers and are even discouraged by the school's frequent signals that condemn their academic failures.
- Different value structures often operate within the classroom: the values embedded in the curriculum, the values transmitted by the teacher, and the values of the student, developed from their life situations.

About Families and Communities

- Poor communication between home and school seems to be related to increased probability of dropping out.
- The general dropout process is dependent on the youth's integration into the community social structure, particularly the level of continuity among the demands of the school, family, and community contexts.

EXHIBIT 2

FACTORS INVOLVED IN DROPPING OUT

Academic

Dropouts--

- are low achievers.
- are 1 or 2 years behind grade level.
- are unable to tolerate structured activities.
- lack definite educational goals.
- are enrolled in a general course of study rather than vocational education or college preparatory programs.
- have lower occupational aspirations than their peers.
- have difficulty in abstract reasoning, generalizing, and forming relationships.
- do not read at grade level.
- experience difficulty in mathematics.
- have low perceptual performance.

Behavioral

Dropouts--

- have a high rate of absenteeism and truancy.
- exhibit discipline problems in school.
- do not participate in extracurricular activities.
- associate with friends who are outside of school, usually older dropouts.
- have frequent health problems.
- are inclined toward physical rather than mental activities.
- are impulsive decision makers.
- work more hours per week on a job than do completers.
- are overrepresented among chemical users and abusers, delinquents, adolescent parents, and persons who attempt suicide or self-mutilation.

Family

Dropouts--

- come from single parent homes.
- come from low-income homes.
- experience little solidarity with their families.
- have more older siblings than friends.
- are exposed to a dropout at home.
- come from families that are more mobile than other students' families.
- belong to a minority group.
- lack cultural and economic experiences which often relate to success in traditional school programs.

Psychological

Dropouts--

- feel rejected by the school.
- have negative attitudes toward school.
- do not identify with school life.
- feel that courses are not relevant to their individual needs.
- lack incentive for achievement in traditional school activities.
- are socially isolated or socially and emotionally disturbed.
- are loners who are unaccepted by their peers.
- have a poor self-concept and lack a clear sense of identity.
- have experienced some form of trauma including abuse.
- cannot relate to authority figures.
- are attracted to outside jobs, wages, and experiences.

EXHIBIT 3

OPTIMUM ENVIRONMENTS

Classroom climate characteristics that best help dropout-prone students are these:

- o A positive atmosphere and supportive peer culture
- o A discipline system that is both fair and effective
- o Person-oriented rather than rule-oriented
- o Decision-making opportunities for students
- o Opportunities to develop self-esteem and self-confidence
- o Instruction and opportunities to help students develop a commitment to social and life values
- o Opportunities to orient students to the broader world outside school, showing the correlation between education and work
- o Opportunities for students to become aware of their potential as workers
- o Parents and community volunteers as mentors
- o Minimal structure and high flexibility
- o Individualized and small-group instructional materials and practices
- o Instructional methods that involve tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory perceptions
- o Peer teaching and cooperative learning techniques
- o Instructional activities that build group cohesiveness
- o Promotion of cooperative behavior among students
- o Basic skills development, integrating the use of basic and vocational skills
- o Time on task for repeated practice

School environmental characteristics that best help dropout-prone students are these:

- o High but flexible expectations for students
- o Diverse opportunities for achieving success
- o Recognition of students' achievements
- o Opportunities for students to define their goals clearly and realistically
- o Opportunities to help students monitor their own progress in achieving their goals
- o Motivational instruction and activities to heighten students' occupational aspirations
- o The early identity of at-risk students
- o More extensive guidance and counseling services for at-risk students
- o Specific education plans for dropout-prone at-risk students
- o Programs that help students address the conditions and stresses that place them at risk
- o The promotion of students' sense of belonging to the school
- o Clear, fair, and consistent disciplinary rules
- o A high degree of student participation in extracurricular activities
- o Intimate and caring work environment for staff and students alike
- o Close adult-student relationships

TABLE 2

REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT (APPALACHIA)

Reasons	Percentage
Academic achievement/incompatibility with school--lack of motivation, dislike of school, age requirement was met	58.6
Financial--including employment and economic	14.0
Marriage or pregnancy	3.6
Behavior problems--poor pupil-staff relationships, poor relationships with fellow pupils, immaturity, and expulsion	3.1
Court action/correctional institution	3.0
Health--including illness, physical disability	1.8
Home responsibility--including needed at home and parental influence	1.8
Military	0.4
Mental or emotional	0.1
Other reasons or reason unknown	13.6
TOTAL	100.0

SOURCE: Cox et al. 1985.

Many educators believe that the middle school is the proper time to implement dropout prevention strategies. Both educators and lay leaders are beginning to stress the relevance of the middle and junior high school experiences. Many assert that this is the time to begin focusing on such concepts as "options" or "choices"; to make young adolescents aware that learning experiences lead to tangible consequences; and to help position young people to "connect." It also is the time to begin to look at traditional pathways that are available within the school, the time to begin building bridges to a vocational education, to an academic curriculum, to a technical curriculum, to a 2-year or 4-year college, and to the world beyond.

In exploring the concept of program articulation, the National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education (1984) recommends that the early stages of career development--awareness and exploration--be well underway before students enter high school so they can make informed choices. The National Council on Employment Policy (1984) recommends that all youth be provided job search assistance and a first work experience, if needed, in their early teens. The National Association of Secondary School Principals' Council on Middle Level Education (n.d.) identifies a number of crucial instructional goals for young adolescents, including the need to develop adaptive skills useful throughout their lifetime; to explore their aptitudes, interests, and talents; and to develop positive self-concepts. The Institute for Educational Leadership (Sheppard 1986) suggests that if junior/middle schools appear to be the level at which at-riskness begins, resources for those grades could and should be increased.

Educational attitudes developed during early childhood appear to be integrated by age 14 into behavioral patterns associated with school success (Rumberger 1983). It is at this period that young adolescents make decisions affecting both their personal and educational futures. Morrow (1986) estimates that 6 percent of all dropout occur in grades K-8, 39 percent in grades 11-12, and 55 percent in grades 9-10. These data indicate that if the dropout rate is to be reduced, preventive efforts must focus on youth identified as dropout-prone during early adolescence and must continue through graduation.

There are a number of obstacles to effective dropout prevention strategies: (1) some youth may lag so far behind in academic skills that they may not catch up in a reasonable time to graduate or may become discouraged; (2) inadequacies in schoolwide conditions, such as large class size and overcrowding, so that dropout programs alone may be insufficient to prevent youth from dropping out; and (3) initial implementation difficulties so that it is unrealistic to expect effective outcomes until a program becomes fully operational (U.S. Government Accounting Office 1987). An example of the latter are youth in middle school programs who are removed from regular classes for support services, thus disrupting their instructional time. Also, some dropout strategies may be inappropriate for students who are too young for jobs, too bright for remedial work, or too talented for regular programs.

We must discover what will impact at the local level. Programs must offer multiple interventions and, although not every youth needs the same interventions, most will likely require some type of basic education, counseling, and other support services. Certain program elements are strongly related to program success: a caring and committed staff, a safe and secure learning environment, personalized instruction, a low student-teacher ratio, and program flexibility, such as in hours and curriculum. Although the task is difficult, we simply must break through the barriers--attitudinal and institutional--to make the policy, program, and resource allocation decisions needed to improve our schools. Many different program strategies have been presented. Here are some brief examples:

- New York City generally combines two systemwide strategies. One is to make middle schools and high schools responsible for academic performance levels and dropout rates; the other is to direct a mix of support services to students most likely to drop out, as exhibited by their poor attendance (*Employment and Training Reporter* 21 October 1987).

- Rumberger (1983) suggests four broad elements: different programs designed for different types of dropouts; an appropriate mix of educational and noneducational services in each program; accurate and timely identification of high risk students; and programs for early prevention, late prevention, and recovery.

- The U.S. General Accounting Office (1987) lists 6 primary program objectives, 8 program factors, and 12 program services:

  --The six objectives are improved academic performance, attitudinal change, reduced absenteeism, placement back in school, job training/placement, and prenatal care/parenting support services.

--The eight factors are caring and committee staff, nonthreatening environment for learning, low student-teacher ratio, individualized instruction, program flexibility, links with social service agencies, involvement of parents in students' development, and links with employers.

--The 12 services are personal counseling, basic education, career counseling, parental involvement, assistance in obtaining social services, job search assistance, job skills training, part-time employment placement, pregnancy/parental counseling, GED preparation, day care, and English as a second language.

Dale Mann (1986a) of Teacher's College, Columbia University, is probably correct when he observed that although virtually everything is being done, we are not always certain to whom and with what effect. In fact, he speculates that there may be as many as 71 logically possible approaches to dropout prevention and/or remediation. He also categorizes his list into what he calls the four Cs--cash (the link between learning and earning), caring, computers, and coalitions.

Although we, too, identify myriads of specific school choices, we categorize the guidelines offered in this text into three primary areas: social and psychological bonding, the basics--curriculum and instruction--and youth advocacy. In the "bonding" section, we explore a number of specific policies and practices that can help connect and reconnect students so that they can reach their potential by staying in school. In the "basics" section, we present a number of practical ways to help students by describing a variety of experiences through which they can learn basic skills. In the "advocacy" section, we explore ways to promote and support students actively so that they have successful school experiences. It is hard to separate the three approaches. Everything we suggest ultimately is intended to strengthen bonding with the classroom, school, and community. Everything we recommend is done so from the position of youth advocacy.

Discussion Items

1. Is dropping out a serious problem in our school? in our district? What is the extent of the problem in each?
2. How do we calculate the dropout rate? Is it rising? falling? remaining the same as it has been for the past three years?
3. Have we attempted to estimate the local financial costs of dropping out?
4. Should our primary focus be on "school improvement" or "student correction" strategies? Can we do both? What are our priorities? our short-term goals? our long-range objectives?
5. Who actually is dropping out of our schools? What are the primary reasons?
6. When should we begin our interventions? How early can we begin?
7. How can we articulate with the elementary schools? What can we do to improve linkages with our senior high schools?
8. What are our primary obstacles to developing effective dropout prevention strategies? Conversely, what are our most obvious facilitators?
9. What do we believe is the "proper mix" in determining our strategies? How can we justify our decisions?

HOW CAN WE PROMOTE BONDING?

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HOW CAN WE PROMOTE BONDING?

What Is Bonding?

Young adolescents have a strong need to feel they belong, to be accepted as they are, and to play an active role in the lives of their family, friends, classmates, the "school family," and the community. Those who feel this sense of belonging generally develop an emotional attachment and commitment often referred to as social and psychological bonding.

It is imperative that we cautiously evaluate our attitudes and prejudices in any discussion of bonding. As educators, we are often predisposed to expecting the manifestation of certain types of bonds (i.e., those with school), and we reward students for these choices. Other bonds students may form (i.e., with a drug-consuming peer group) are equally valid and must not be disregarded however much we disagree with the methodology. Attempts to dissuade student's from spending time with such a peer group may instead be interpreted as an attempt to break a bond they have formed; unless a significant alternative as offered, further alienation is at risk.

Many of our youth are disconnected in one way or another--that is, they have failed to form the bonds deemed "desirable." When looking at research findings and dropout statistics, it is necessary to keep in mind any prejudices researchers may have held and the researcher's ethnocentricity in evaluating research findings. Further, we must realize our own ethnocentricity and values as we are met with research results. At issue then is whether students move into productive adult lives or fall into patterns of chronic failure. There are many ways to categorize at-risk youth; the following will provide a common language for discussion:

- **The alienated.** These young people are uninterested in or dissatisfied with the values represented by school and work. They often lack motivation to succeed, have poor school and work attendance records, and do not perform nearly to their potential. Some are passive, others defiant. Economic resources are not at issue: many alienated students come from the middle classes. Nor is alienation an urban problem; alienated students are everywhere.

- **The disadvantaged.** These young people often have family support and motivation to succeed but suffer from various effects of economic deprivation and/or racial discrimination. Although they are not yet alienated, they are at risk of becoming so and at risk of never moving into satisfying, long-term employment.

- **The disadvantaged and alienated.** These young people exhibit all the symptoms of alienation but, in addition, have problems associated with being economically disadvantaged. A disproportionate share of these young people are minorities, a fact that complicates their problems and community efforts to help them in school or the workplace. Many lack basic social and academic skills, family support, useful networks, and self-esteem. (Education Commission of the States 1985)

Undoubtedly, all adolescents experience some degree of alienation. For some, alienation is more acute, and, for them, dropping out of both school and society is the final disintegration of a bond that may have once existed, albeit loosely. Dropping out usually is not a single event but rather a culminating point in a more extensive disengagement. Some youth rebel. Some withdraw; some feel safer not to participate, so they quietly disappear.

Brofenbrenner (1986) suggests that the forces that cause youthful alienation are growing, that the best way to counteract them is by creating connections throughout our culture, and that schools can help build such links. The most important links must be between the home, peer group, and school.

Students need to bond with adults as well as peers as they shift from childhood to adulthood. The concept socialization comes up often in the dropout literature. Adults often mistake early physical growth as an indicator that a student has early social maturity. But, in effect, "children in adult bodies" need more, rather than less, social interaction with adults to gain the social maturity necessary to deal with their precarious growth patterns. Socialization is extremely critical in developing social maturity during the middle school years. Social maturation during early adolescence depends on how realistically the youngster can deal with physical growth and transformation toward biological adulthood (Arth et al. 1985).

Many experts in dropout research suggest that the dropout process depends on the youth's integration into the community social structure. Weidman and Friedman (1984), for example, believe that the greater the youth's social integration into nondeviant social groups and contexts (both academic and community), and the more congruent the rewards of significant others within those social groups and contexts, the less likely the youth will be to exhibit deviant behavior (dropout and/or delinquency).

They also suggest that it is not failure in academic achievement alone but any failure within the school system that may precipitate a "tactfully voluntary retreatist act." Interestingly, they recommend that because dropping out is a symptom of larger problems, interventions should occur when social, economic, and family influences can be overcome--and that this intervention should be significant.

Another related concept is normlessness. Elliott and Voss (1974), for example, believe the strongest predictors of dropout are academic failure, school normlessness and social isolation, exposure to dropouts in the home, and commitment to peers. Exposure to dropouts, whether it occurs in the school or home, is generally conducive to dropping out. This further exemplifies the power of bonding to impact on a student's choices.

Glasser, cited in an interview with Gough (1987), also talks about bonding even though he doesn't use the term as such. He believes that if a student feels no sense of belonging, that student will pay little attention to academic subjects. Instead, the youngster often searches desperately for friendship and acceptance, sometimes not always from "proper" sources. Glasser feels that even good students do not always feel important in school. Students who receive poor grades feel less important. Glasser speaks of the "need for power" or a sense of personal importance.

Glasser has developed a very useful theory that he calls the *control theory*. It is based on the concept that we all are internally motivated by needs built into our biological structure. To the extent we can satisfy those needs regularly, we gain effective control of our lives. One such need is a sense of importance and one way it can be met by students is through their participation in school situations allowing them to feel significant. Glasser concludes that junior high is much less satisfying than elementary school because junior high students feel so unimportant. He also says that we have to focus particularly on the middle and junior high and "then move these ideas up as well as down," that is, to other grade levels.

Some students fail to form the necessary bonds to keep them in school. Such youth are referred to in the literature as "disconnected." The various concepts of "disconnection" must be presented for a thorough understanding of bonding.

Disconnection from School

About 700,000 students drop out of school each year; another 300,000 are chronic truants. Many experienced school personnel can predict reasonably well who might drop out even before the students reaches middle or junior high school. Disconnection "is not a tragedy because it happens; it is a tragedy because many people saw it coming for years and did nothing about it" (Education Commission of the States 1985, p. 11).

Disconnection from Work

Disconnection from work can occur in several ways. The first is physical; students may not live where there are sufficient jobs. Though complex, this problem is solvable: transport the youth to the jobs. Other disconnections are more problematic. Some youth, particularly minorities, are trapped in jobs that offer low pay, minimal benefits, and little advancement. Solutions to this problem involve building bridges between entry-level jobs, schools, and professional, technical, and management opportunities. A third type of disconnection occurs when young people lack the basic skills to do the available jobs. We must bear primary responsibility for that. Last, many alienated youth are not very interested in work. They show little ambition on the job. Their behaviors keep some employers from hiring them and force others to fire them. It may be that our most important contribution for these youth is not the academic skills they acquire, but the habits and values that we impart. We must do a better job at instilling a sense of responsibility and reliability (Education Commission of the States 1985, p. 12).

Disconnection from Society

There are broader symptoms that suggest "underlying problems with the nation's integrative systems." For example, teenage pregnancy and childbirth rates among teens have grown, regardless of ethnicity and socioeconomic status. More than 1 million teens become pregnant each year and most of these teenagers do not marry (Education Commission of the States 1985).

The Education Commission of the States has compiled a chart that gives some shocking data on these types of problems, as shown in exhibit 4.

EXHIBIT 4

INDICATORS OF GROWING YOUTH PROBLEMS

Children in poverty	- Up from 16 percent in 1970 to 22 percent in 1985. About 14 million children live in poverty; almost half of black children and one-third of Hispanic children live in poverty.
Teenage pregnancy	- Up 60-fold since 1960.
Unmarried mothers	- Up from less than 1 percent in 1970 to over 6 percent today.
Female headed households	- Up from 12 percent in 1970 to 23 percent in 1984.
Teenage homicide	- Up more than 200 percent for whites; 16 percent for nonwhites since 1950.
Teenage suicide	- Up more than 150 percent since 1950.
Teenage crime	- Arrests up from 18 percent in 1960 to 34 percent in 1980 (18- to 24-year olds).
Teenage unemployment	- Up 35 percent for nonwhites; 60 percent for whites since 1961.

SOURCE: Education Commission of the States 1985.

We do not want to oversimplify bonding and make it sound like the panacea for all our disconnection problems. In the past, we "lured" youth into school by structuring assorted activities for them. But in the 1980s, according to LeCompte (1987), nearly 70 percent of all teenagers worked during the school year, had no time for sports or clubs, and often were too tired to do their homework. As schools lose their centrality in their lives, we also lose our capacity to hold students until graduation.

To briefly summarize our discussion of bonding, we know that--

- o meaningful participation in school and community life is vital for bonding to occur. For example, we can try to engage students by involving them in realistic, authentic (that is, nonphony) school improvement and community service activities.

- o positive social interaction with peers and adults is critical. We can try to involve students by providing small-group learning activities and by providing space for students to congregate informally.

- o our relationships with students do not have to be "gushy," in fact, they should not be. Rather they should be based on trust and mutual respect.

In figure 1, we have adapted a chart originally presented by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory that summarizes the concepts of bonding quite well.

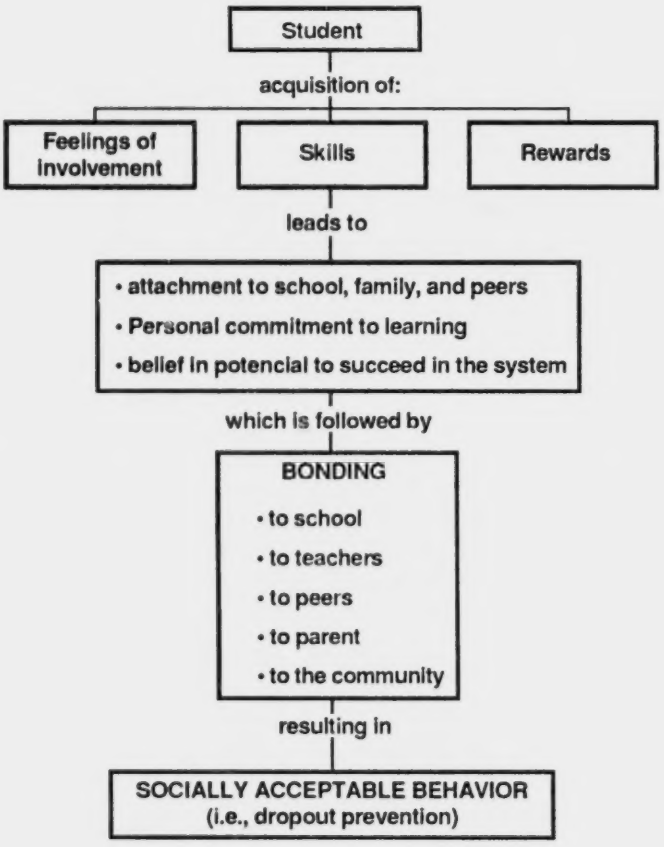

Figure 1. A social development model of dropout prevention

SOURCE: Adapted from Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

Maintaining Good Climate Control

Almost everyone who writes about the dropout problem agrees that the overall climate that we generate in the classroom and school is most important. Everything that happens in the school, and the way it happens, adds to or detracts from the environment. As educators, we have the power to determine the quality and quantity of the messages we convey to students. Unfortunately, schools sometimes are perceived as a hostile environment where students see themselves as chronic failures. Often the typical climate is one of order, control, and competition.

Joan Lipsitz (1984), one of the most thoughtful writers on middle school programs, has some keen insight into the issues of school climate that she correctly feels is made up of myriad factors which, when added together, determine the school's culture. "The individual decisions made by each school reflect one school's thoughtful response to the developmental needs of the age group and the particular needs of that schools' clientele." To Lipsitz, the most important factors contributing to an effective climate are--

- o the physical setting, the means by which order is achieved;
- o teachers' working conditions;
- o teachers' beliefs and expectations;
- o the acknowledgment of reciprocity in human relations;
- o the quality of leadership;
- o the clarity of purpose.

Two other researchers in middle school education--Johnston and Markle (1986)--similarly maintain that effective middle schools have a social climate that fosters excellence. They suggest the following eight characteristics of such a climate:

1. A clear, schoolwide set of goals are evident for social behavior and academic achievement.
2. Teachers, students, parents, and administrators agree on basic rules of conduct.
3. Teachers and administrators hold high expectations for students.
4. Teachers believe that they can teach all of the students in their charge.
5. Students know that teachers care when they express concern over incomplete assignments and when they show happiness for a job well done.
6. A system of clear, public rewards for achievement is evident. Although the system recognizes all forms of achievement, the focus is on academic performance.
7. Principals--as well as teachers--create a climate wherein learning is valued, is not subject to interruption, and is a collective enterprise.
8. Parents and other community members frequently are involved in meaningful school activities.

Johnston and Ramos de Perez (1985) discuss four general aspects of school climate: physical, academic, organization, and social-emotional. In the physical arena, effective middle schools, despite their age, are well lit and bright, well maintained, uniformly clean, and graffiti free. The academic climate is characterized by people talking about academics; academic achievements are recognized and rewarded; academics

form the basis for leisure pursuits; expectations are high--but reasonable--and failure is tolerated. With regard to organizational climate, effective schools have rules--but they are clear and reasonable; a student council serves in an advisory capacity, but it also performs as a service club in that it undertakes projects that improve the quality of school life; students feel confident that they could go to the principal with a concern or problem; and teachers have a major voice in decision making. As far as the social-emotional climate is concerned, schools are encouraging, welcoming, supporting, secure, and trusting places where anticipate student needs are anticipated and fulfilled without fuss or fanfare; the focus is on what students can do, not on what they cannot do; and, last, the school is a civil place where students are not "hassled" and, in return, do not "hassle" others in order to feel better about themselves.

Johnston and de Perez also offer specific suggestions for assessing and, hence, enhancing school climate. This is done by presenting three interesting notions: the idea of leaders and heroes, the idea of the network, and the idea of rituals and ceremonies. They suggest that we ask ourselves several questions in each area: Who are the "heroes" of the school?, How did they get to be "heroes?", What are the "stories" that circulate in the school network?, What values are portrayed in these "stories?" What behaviors do we engage in on a regular basis?, Into what kinds of events do we put most of our energy?, and What message is being conveyed by our behavior? In addressing these questions, we not only assess school culture, we also give ourselves several more ways to meet the needs of young adolescents.

Another important aspect of climate is the nature, and extent, of "teacher talk." In a massive study of schooling conducted by Goodlad (1983b), one of the many implications for school improvement is the finding that "teacher talk" is by far the most dominant classroom activity. The study finds that, in general, teachers rarely encourage student-to-student dialogue or provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively in small groups or to plan, set goals, or determine different ways of achieving their goals. Another of Goodlad's findings is that in some schools the principal and teachers do not unite to address school problems. Whereas the principal, teachers, students, and parents often are concerned with the same problems, often they are unaware of the concern of the other group, and, thus, problems are left to fester.

Rutter et al. (1979) uses the term "ethos" in talking about climate. The key ingredients of "ethos" are such things as the pervasive values, the principal's treatment and views of teachers, qualitative elements in teacher-student and teacher-teacher interactions, contact with parents, the ability of the faculty to manage school problems, and so on.

Appropriate school size is another important element. Although school size does not help explain the sense of community that effective schools establish, according to Lipsitz (1984), the size of the students' "frame of reference" does. She describes middle schools with a population of over 1,000 students who belong to "teams" of approximately 150. In another school, students belong to small advisory groups within "wings" of about 140 students. Other places have "houses" with approximately 155 students; within them, students identify with single classes, blocks, or teams. The idea is that the unit is small enough for students to identify with youth their own age and the school as a whole. Dividing into subsets helps to strengthen and stabilize peer groups by extending the time students remain together both during the day, and in some instances, over a period of several years. Lipsitz (1984) adds this thought:

> Antisocial behavior that results from the randomness and brevity of student groupings in most secondary schools is substantially reduced in these (middle) schools. (p. 182)

> Popular wisdom tells us a school has to be big to offer diverse opportunities for students. These schools are small or function in small units, yet they offer many roads to rewards. Diversity and intimacy are not mutually exclusive. As a result, large numbers of students who might otherwise be indifferent or alienated become bound to the school culture. (p. 183)

In a real sense, all of these points deal with bonding and school climate. Not surprisingly, researchers find that schools with high dropout and truancy rates also have high rates of student disorder and discipline problems. One report suggests that perhaps the most obvious way to create an orderly atmosphere is to be available and visible to students outside the classroom, in the hallways, before school, between classes, and after school (Rawers 1984). Wehlage and Rutter (1984) suggest that there is some evidence (the Youth in Transition study of a relationship between disciplinary problems in school and dropping out) that the school itself may be contributing to negative school experiences leading to dropping out.

A related concept is governance. Several researchers emphasize the importance of clear rules and their consistent enforcement as essential to maintaining an orderly environment which, in turn, appears to be crucial to high academic achievement.

Still another component is the academic reward system. McDill, Natriello, and Pallas (1985), observe that since potential dropouts typically have obtained poor academic grades, they likely discount the validity or legitimacy of traditional academic evaluation systems. Therefore, teachers working with such students often find it useful to employ a variety of alternative reward systems, for example, learning contracts that specify both effort and proficiency requirements, token economies, and grading systems which base evaluation on individual effort and progress. This notion, in many ways, fits closely into what Fine (1986) concludes are different value structures operating in a classroom. The values, often embedded in the reward structure, are transmitted by the teacher. These values, as stated before, may conflict with those developed from the students' life situations.

Some educators (Beane, Lipke, and Ludewig 1980) distinguish two types of school climates: custodial and humanistic. Beane and his colleagues indicate that students in "humanistic" schools demonstrate higher degrees of "self-actualization" than those in schools with custodial orientations. The latter are characterized by preference for autocratic procedures, punitive sanctions, and impersonalness; the humanistic climate is characterized by student participation in decision making, interaction, and flexibility.

Fine (1986) argues that schools are by no means monolithic, for they are "rife with internal contradiction and therefore the possibility of change" (p. 10). She observes that in many schools she visited (as part of an ethnographic study on dropouts) schooling for the most part "is structured so that student opinions, voices, and critical thoughts remain silenced by teachers and ultimately by their own inhibitions. This is especially true in classes from which students are most likely to drop out.

Classrooms are organized more around control than conversation, more around the authority of teacher than autonomy of students, and more around competition than collaboration. When students talk to each other or cooperate, it often provokes accusations of cheating from their teachers" (p. 11).

In summary, we know that in schools with a poor climate, teachers are relatively isolated from each other, tend not to receive peer support, and feel impotent to affect schoolwide decisions. In schools with a good climate, the internal structure must be one that relieves anonymity, promotes a sense of community, and "bonds" all of us together--student, teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents. We also know that academic achievement and attendance are higher in schools where students feel the climate is comfortable and pleasant.

School Policies to Consider

School policies obviously have a tremendous amount of relevance to dropout prevention in general and to the concept of bonding in particular. Some policies (e.g., state policies) are only indirectly in our control, that is, to the extent that we as voters elect our state representatives and our professional unions and organizations influencing state policies. We, of course, need to operate in both of these democratic arenas.

Many states are considering legislation of various sorts that deal with dropout prevention, retention, and recovery. Many states are forming interdepartmental task forces to gather information and to recommend legislation and program directions. Illinois, for example, has developed a statewide dropout definition, mandated a 1-250 student-guidance counselor ratio, and funding for alternative high schools and summer and after school programs. New York has allocated $28 million to improve attendance and retention programs, encouraging collaborative efforts of school and community organizations to provide counseling, in-school suspension, work experience, and other efforts (Center for Dropout Prevention 1987).

Some policies are developed and put into practice at the local level where educators have more direct control. Focusing on these policies involves the answers to some policy questions:

- What is the extent of the problem in our district? in our school? (This information must be accurate so we can understand the dimension of the problem.)
- At which grades should we begin our efforts?
- What strategies should we pursue? What resources do we need? What resources are available in the community?
- How can services be coordinated effectively? Although we do can provide all available services, we must be at the center of the referral process, for example, pregnant and parenting youth are less likely to drop out if someone provides them with access to health and social services, employment services, day care, and the like.

- How can parents be encouraged to become involved in their children's education?

- How can we tailor dropout prevention programs to our own sets of circumstances?

- How can our resources be allocated effectively to serve our dropout-prone students? (Although these students are more expensive to educate,do we feel the moral responsibility to provide them with the best money can buy?)

According to Anne Wheelock of the Massachusetts Advocacy Center (1986a), although schools cannot change students' social or economic background, there are choices regarding the official responses to school-based factors associated with dropping out. For this reason, the research of greatest value to practitioners addresses the impact of school policies associated with school performance in three areas: attendance, nonpromotion, and suspension" (p. 8).

The research to which Wheelock is referring indicates that policies and practices adopted in response to student performance in attendance, academics, and behavior have a significant impact on students' decisions to stay or leave. She cites the various work of Wehlage who, for one, documents that as students' negative experiences accumulate, they often develop problems with which they cannot easily cope. That may be why Wheelock uses the phrase "from pushouts to dropouts." She also adds that the dropout literature has begun to focus more and more on research that deals with effectively teaching low economic status children. According to this research, it is not the students' background as much as it is the schools' response that determines their success in school. Also, the research has begun to focus on those interactions between schools and students that put the latter at risk. Wehlage, particularly, studies the ways students' negative school experiences add up to a point where some students "take leave." Incidentally, Wheelock also notes that Wehlage and another researcher, Michelle Fine, both report that leaving school results in short-term improvement in self-esteem among dropouts compared to noncollege bound students who stay in school. She concludes that this fact alone should tell us something about the school experiences of our dropouts and that as long as school practices continue to communicate rejection to students at risk, school leaving will continue.

The Massachusetts Advocacy Center is a member of the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (1985), which has devoted much of its time and energy to exploring school policies that put students at risk. The coalition identifies the following policies as barriers to excellence:

- Suspension of students for truancy or tardiness

- Inappropriate placement of students in special education

- Rigid nonpromotion policies

- Rigid disciplinary policies imposed without student, parent, or teacher consultation and that students perceive as unfairly administered

- Teaching approaches emphasizing rote or passive learning

- o Departmentalized curriculum focused on subjects taught in 50-minute blocks
- o Tracking and ability grouping
- o Minimal counseling for problem students
- o A "back-to-basics" approach with no room for music, art, or group activities
- o Limited physical education
- o Lack of relationship between school and community environments

They conclude that these policies and practices are guaranteed to contribute to poor attendance, discipline, and achievement, all classic symptoms of dropout-prone students.

Also Wheelock (1986a) sums up the dropout's situation as shown in figure 2.

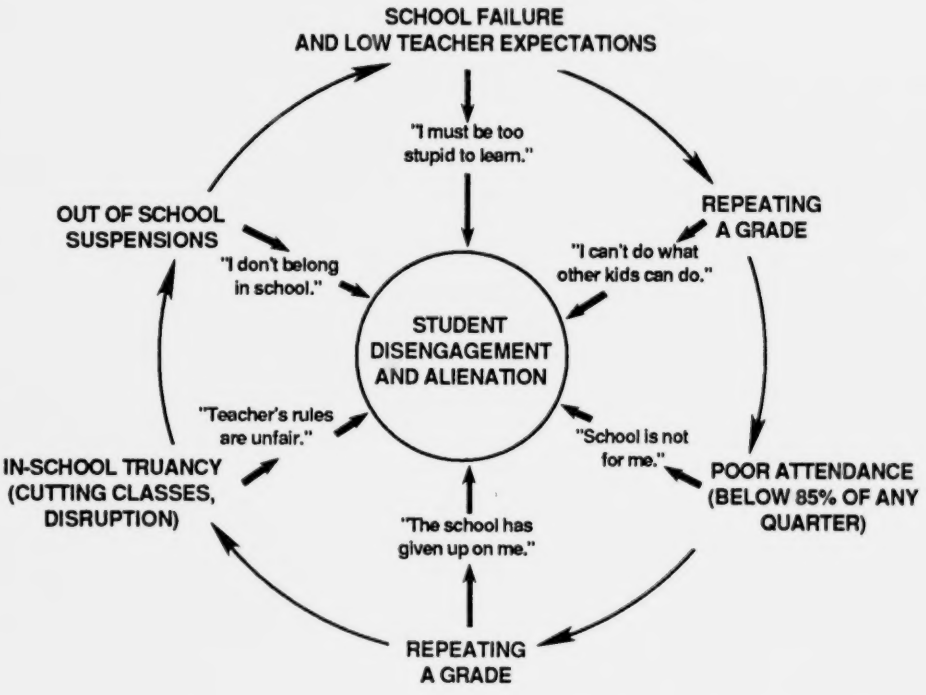
SCHOOL FAILURE
AND LOW TEACHER EXPECTATIONS
"I must be too stupid to learn."
REPEATING A GRADE
"I can't do what other kids can do."
POOR ATTENDANCE (BELOW 85% OF ANY QUARTER)
"School is not for me."
"The school has given up on me."
REPEATING A GRADE
IN-SCHOOL TRUANCY (CUTTING CLASSES, DISRUPTION)
"Teacher's rules are unfair."
OUT OF SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS
"I don't belong in school."
STUDENT DISENGAGEMENT AND ALIENATION

Figure 2. The at-risk merry-go-round

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Attendance and Truancy

In general, the middle school students with whom Wheelock (1986b) spoke during the course of their research were not convinced that their schools had a real stake in their education or well-being. This finding leads the researchers to speak in terms of "school-based exclusion practices" and, even more strongly, "rejection policies." Some teachers feel that "one less kid is one less problem." Dropping out or truancy is seen as "relieving the burden." One junior high administrator, in fact, was reported to have responded to this issue in the following way: "When the truant comes back in, he is not school-oriented, he has a very poor attitude, he may be disruptive...I am wondering if we do bring all of these dropouts back into school, can we afford it?" (Assembly of Office Research n.d., p. 74).

The challenge is clear: we must identify the barriers to school attendance and develop programs to reduce them. We need not build on lack of knowledge, for we do know that poor attendance is correlated with poor academic performance and that both are signals that a student is at risk of dropping out. When a school has a firm commitment to all students for the completion of their education, we would expect to see the resources mobilized to promote improved attendance as well as improved school performance.

We know that a connection exists between attendance and dropping out. Truancy and nonattendance are strong predictors of dropping out. Attendance problems often lead to school failure as students fall further and further behind. Wheelock (1986a) asserts that, in Boston middle schools, attendance problems have been found to be school-based. She cites a 5-year study with findings that suggest that attendance problems were "powerfully associated" with students' status as overaged for their grade. Wheelock's point is that school policies may aggravate rather than ameliorate the problem.

It is helpful to know why some students do not attend classes. For some, family problems discourage them from attending. For others, school is threatening when students see the costs of attending to be greater than the rewards. Although many students whom Wheelock interviewed spoke warmly about their teachers who helped them learn, too often the negative experiences outweighed the positives (Wheelock 1986b).

Also, many truant students learn at a slower pace or differently than other students and thus feel frustrated--especially when teachers don't explain things clearly, when these students feel teachers are "picking on" them, or when they are embarrassed for not understanding the lessons. Some truants reported racial tensions as a major problem.

Wheelock and her colleagues (1986b) were convinced that students skipped school to meet developmental needs that were not being met in schools, particularly the need for social interaction. During interviews, such students spoke of exploring the city; one spent time helping to clean a local Burger King--without pay. The latter "volunteer service" led Wheelock's research team to conclude that perhaps "when students choose these activities, they may be choosing them because opportunities for learning about the larger world and for experimenting with adult roles are not available in school" (Wheelock 1986b, p. 33).

In short, these findings led the researchers to conclude that certain policies need to be the focus for change--at least in their district. School conditions that

contribute to truancy must be the target for reform. Schools that accommodate the students' need for social interaction and exploration of new experiences could go a long way toward convincing many students that the benefits of attending school far outweigh the benefits of truancy.

As far as attendance is concerned, then, Wheelock and her colleagues (1986b) recommend a number of significant policies, including the following:

- Nonpromotion as a response to poor attendance must be eliminated. Academic punishment (whether nonpromotion or reduction in grade) for poor attendance does not address the causes of truancy. Changes in classroom placement as well as services that emphasize ongoing communication with parents (in the parents' language) should be considered.

- There must be early and immediate response. Each absence should trigger an immediate call to the student's home. There should be no time lapse; moreover, alternative phone numbers should be available for parents who are not at home, cannot be called at work, or do not own a phone.

- Schools should respond to tardiness in ways that discourage further attendance problems; for example, "tardy rooms" often result in students' missing classwork that they can ill-afford to miss. We need to explore ways to correct tardiness that do not have academic consequences.

- Individualized assessments should be developed for persistently tardy students.

- We need to devise reward systems that acknowledge improved attendance so that students don't fall back into poor habits.

Although we can't begin to list all of the specific relevant practices that are going on throughout the country, we can give some examples. One community-based program in Boston has students and parents sign a "contract" that includes both personal attendance and academic goals. Each morning a staff person calls the school to check attendance; if students are not there, a call or home visit takes place immediately. Another agency offers a Homework Center that provides tutoring for 2 hours in the evening. In this way, the school program is properly extended into the community. Another program, Back to School, serves students ages 13-15 who have left the public schools. Here the basis of the intervention is an individualized learning contract that includes attending classes 20 hours a week plus individual tutoring, group activities on life-coping skills, career awareness, and drug or alcohol education.

Many other places have established various incentive activities including the publication of a monthly attendance motivation bulletin; awards for schools, teachers, and classes for high attendance; and team attendance competitions (Cox et al. 1985). Middle schools are more likely to monitor students and involve parents in efforts to improve attendance than any other level of schooling. The most common activities at this level, according to Clark and Irizarry (1986), deal with contacting parents by computerized phone dialing systems, home visits (usually by counselors or family workers), and parent workshops, conferences, and/or letters.

Personal contact with families by professionals is an effective strategy, as are incentives offered directly to groups and/or individual students. Other approaches that have been used are outings recommended by students, fast-food vouchers, free movie tickets, T-shirts, school supplies, and so forth. Also, jobs in and around the schools serve as incentives. Another promising practice is a peer or buddy system in which class members follow up on absent classmates with a phone call or note.

One final important point: according to Willis (1986), some schools that have started attendance incentive strategies report that the traditional attitudes of some school staff about "attending school for its own value" may present an obstacle to intervention. To Willis, the existence of this value, or lack of it, is the core of the problem. Since the quality of life in the classroom is the ultimate challenge, in the context of dull, boring, or "antilearning" environments, incentives may not have lasting power. In other words, on a scale of 1-10, "climate control" is more significant than "extrinsic rewards."

Suspension

The policy issues of attendance, suspension, and nonpromotion are closely related. Attendance rates tell only part of the story since, normally, student absentee data do not count students out of school due to suspension. The Massachusetts Advocacy Center appears to be at the "cutting edge" on this issue. Much of what it ascertains has application far beyond Boston.

Suspension is likely to have powerful impact on marginal students. It transmits a loud and clear message that they do not belong in school. Some of the facts surrounding this issue are quite frightening. For example, Boston high school dropouts are more than twice as likely to have been suspended the previous year than students who stayed in school (about 15 percent compared to about 7 percent). National data support this finding. Wehlage and Rutter (1983) find that suspension (or being put on probation) distinguishes school dropouts from noncollege-bound students who do graduate; 44 percent of black dropouts and 31 percent of Hispanic dropouts had been suspended or put on probation at least once compared to 19 percent and 11 percent of their respective stay-in counterparts. Also, minority group students--especially black and Hispanics--are suspended about three times as often as white students.

According to Wheelock (1986b), the increasing rate of Hispanic students suspended from middle schools is especially alarming given their high dropout rates. Data on these groups also are quite similar in Boston and throughout the country. In Boston, the percentage of black students suspended has ranged during the past 3 years between 11 and 12 percent compared to the 8.8-9.6 for all middle school students. In Boston, approximately 41 percent of all suspensions in middle schools are repeat suspensions. The intent here is not to single out one city's problems, but to call attention to the dimensions of the problem. Suspension places students in an at-risk position; the next step often is dropping out.

The Massachusetts study also presents some other relevant findings. For example, suspensions do not appear to be necessary for maintaining order in middle schools. In fact, they may reflect a failure to meet the developmental needs of adolescents. In Wheelock (1986b), Kaeser estimates that perhaps 80 percent of school disruptions result from the way the class or a school is managed. The Children's Defense Fund indicates that almost 11 percent of the out-of-school youth in a national survey

indicated that suspension triggered their decision to drop out.

Exclusion from school, Wheelock and others argue, is no solution. In fact, it may exacerbate the problem. Recent research on middle schools identifies aspects of a positive school climate that contributes to improved discipline and reduces the need for out-of-school suspension. According to Lipsitz (1984), middle schools with effective disciplinary climates commit themselves to the students' personal and social development as a worthwhile goal. An orderly climate emerges when school rules are "owned" by student and staff alike and not because nonconforming students are excluded. This "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" philosophy should never be one of the cardinal principles of education.

Many middle school students who are suspended have been "convicted" because they have been disruptive. Yet, as teachers and counselors, we know that disruption means different things to different people. A disorder that one teacher cannot handle might be managed skillfully by another. Also, a behavior considered disruptive by one teacher may be viewed as acceptable behavior elsewhere. It's all quite subjective.

The Massachusetts report presents several recommendations to which we need to give careful thought. For example:

- Out-of-school suspension should be used only for students who carry weapons or use drugs in school or where assaultive behavior will result in criminal charges. Suspensions for other reasons may indicate that we ourselves may be doing something improper.

- Alternatives to suspension should emphasize conflict resolution and problem solving. Teaching new behaviors and skills should replace old and tired exclusion policies.

- Schools should be required to report the number of students referred for suspension from each teacher. The purpose of this is to support our colleagues who may need additional training in classroom management techniques.

- Schools should be required to report data--on both the number of suspensions and the number of students suspended in each school--in such a way as to indicate the distribution of multiple suspensions. This approach would show the numbers of students at risk and the severity of risk due to suspension.

- Suspension data by special education status should be collected and the Individualized Educational Plans of special education students should be reviewed after three suspensions. (Wheelock 1986b)

One alternative to traditional suspension is the possibility of in-school suspension. In-school suspension is designed for students who need other opportunities to develop the self-discipline required to take advantage of the school's academic program. It provides them with assistance in examining their behavior and the consequences of their actions. Following are some objectives of such programs:

- To provide a learning environment for students with problems which normally would lead to suspension

- To identify causes of students' maladjustment with consequent referral for assistance to proper personnel and/or agencies

- To coordinate efforts with administrators, counselors, and teachers in order to aid in lessening or resolving the student's learning and adjustment problem ("Dropout Prevention" n.d.)

A number of approaches have been suggested in the "Dropout Prevention," materials from North Carolina. For example:

- In-school suspension teacher and counselor should--

  --maintain contact with the student's teachers regarding the student's adjustment, assignments, and progress;

  --exchange information with student services staff in order to deal with the causes underlying the student's behavior;

  --work with appropriate student services staff to initiate and maintain contact with parents.

- Teacher, counselor, and principal should collaborate efforts to develop procedures for daily program activities.

- Placement should be made solely through action of the principal or his/her designee based on suspendable offense on the student's part.

The recognition that out-of-school suspension may be harmful is the basis for in-school suspension programs. Because these programs aim to keep students in school, they are a step in the right direction--as long as they address the roots of the problem. As long as the goal is not one of reducing the number of out-of-school suspensions, such programs are worthwhile. Of course, large numbers of kids may still be excluded from classrooms--if not the school itself. Hence, we need to guard against making the program a dumping ground. Nor do we want to assign school work as punishment. That practice only reinforces negative messages. In-school suspensions can also hide other problems, such as the racial proportions or disproportions of students who make up the in-school suspension population. As with other types of suspension, it is at best a short-term solution that may or may not correct other conditions contributing to disruptive behavior. It should not create additional problems for students or create permanent isolation booths from their peers. As with any other program, it should be carefully monitored. We must ensure that such practices are not overused and do not encourage discrimination. Program goals, for example, should not be simply to keep students off the streets or out of the recordkeeping books. Here are a number of proposed guidelines for in-school suspension programs:

- Written procedures should be developed that clearly state how students are referred and assigned.

- An administrator should be responsible for determining if the assignment of students to the program is appropriate. This person should have the authority and resources to pursue other appropriate actions such as referral to other agencies.

- An academic component should be provided that allows students to keep up with regular classroom instruction.

- A guidance component should be present with counselors or others who can help students explore alternative classroom behaviors.

- Provisions are needed for notifying and engaging parents without requiring a conference as a condition for the student's return to the regular classroom.

- Procedures are needed for monitoring and following up individual student progress.

- Provisions should be made for collecting information summarizing the numbers of students assigned by race and referring teacher. (Wheelock 1986b, p. 6)

Mediation is another possible alternative to suspension. A school mediation program typically provides training for both students and teachers in conflict resolution. The Massachusetts Advocacy Center believes that the concept (sometimes called "school-yard mediation") has a proven track record in reducing school conflicts and improving school climate. Apparently students as young as fourth and fifth graders can be trained as "conflict managers." Some administrators fear such a program takes up too much staff time; on the other hand, less staff time is used on discipline. Moreover, teachers trained in these approaches have increased confidence in their classrooms and schools. Of course, a supportive principal, interested staff, students, and parents are essential. Evaluations of such programs indicate that most schools that have implemented them report reductions in truancy and dropout rates (Wheelock 1986 b).

Mediation through conflict management requires problem-solving analysis and listening skills, benefits that likely spill over into the academic area. Last, mediation provides students with opportunities to participate meaningfully with their "school family." Clearly, it is a promising tool about which we need to learn more.

Nonpromotion and Retention

We know from the research that students who are older than others in their class are more likely to leave school even though they may have adequate reading scores (Neubauer 1987). Thus, a policy aimed at keeping students in a particular grade until they have mastered the subject may have negative repercussions. It was found that if middle grade students repeat a grade once in their school years, the chances of dropping out increased 40 to 50 percent; holding students back put an annual estimated 1,700 students (1984-85 data) at risk of later dropping out (Wheelock 1986b). On a national level, it is estimated that if students are held back a second time, their chances of leaving school before graduation increases by about 90 percent (Mann 1986).

This finding may sound surprising to many of us who view nonpromotion as a primary way of responding to students who are not meeting academic (and also attendance) standards. The threat of nonpromotion traditionally has been used as a means of motivating those whose performance falls below acceptable levels. Standards are important, to be sure, and have been looked upon as a means of restoring meaning to a diploma. The policy of nonpromotion also has been viewed as a catalyst intended to bring additional services to students; that is, it is intended to trigger services that would be provided during the repeated year in grade. According to Wheelock and her colleagues, sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't. In their view, this catalytic action has been mainly "wishful thinking," that is, promised remedial services and smaller classes have not always materialized. The result is that with every grade retention, the chances of these students' graduating decreases.

There is little doubt that a "complex web of factors" contribute to low academic achievement and, hence, to nonpromotion. We need to try to "sort out" school policies and practices that in reality may serve as unrecognized barriers to student success. We obviously are not consciously trying to put a stranglehold on our "kids"; if we were, we would not be teachers or principals. But sometimes our policies inadvertently may cause problems.

The Massachusetts study also contends that nonpromotion costs money, an estimated $3,900 for each student repeating a grade. At that rate, nonpromotion of middle grade students approached $7 million in 1984-85 alone. Retention in grade, the researchers stress, seems to do little to enhance student achievement. On the contrary, it appears to increase the likelihood of dropping out.

The National Coalition of Advocacy for Students (June 1986) has synthesized research on student retention and promotion. The following is a summary of their key findings (pp. 1-3).

> **Repeating a grade does not usually result in improved student achievement.** Several studies show that about one out of every three students held back learned more during the second year in grade than during the first. Up-to-40 percent of students kept back learned less and scored lower on standardized achievement tests during the second year. Given findings that retention does not improve student achievement, not one writer of the six major literature reviews published in the past 12 years has come out in support of retention.
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> **Retained students who make some progress the second year in grade learn less than equally low achieving students who were promoted.** According to a study in Texas, reading achievement increased 0.8 of a grade equivalent for retained students and 1.1 grade equivalent for low-achieving students who had been promoted. In math, the difference was even greater, showing average gains of 0.6 grade equivalent for retained students compared to 1.1 for similar students who were promoted. Researchers conclude that once students have been held back, the achievement gap between them and other students never closes.
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> **Students who receive remedial help with promotion make greater gains in achievement than students who were held back or "socially" promoted.** Also, low-achieving students who are promoted show better social adjustment than

those who repeat a grade. Students who make the most progress are those who are promoted and receive remedial instruction.

Retention in grade has even less benefit once a student reaches sixth grade. The older the child, the less likely is the chance that repeating a grade will have any benefit at all. In fact, even after first grade, educational value becomes less and less apparent. In one study, although 80 percent of boys repeating first grade achieved at a satisfactory level after repeating grade one, less than half of the second and third graders did so after repeating their grades.

Students retained in grade are more likely to have serious attendance problems beginning at the middle school level. One study concludes that students who were frequently absent from school were more likely to have been retained in grade than students who attended regularly; whereas 20 percent of all students with attendance problems were placed at their appropriate grade level, 30 percent of the students with excessive absences were 1 year behind, and 47 percent were 2 years behind.

Students retained in grade are at greater risk of dropping out of school. Holding students back by definition means that the most vulnerable students are put at risk by extending the number of years needed to complete 12 grade and graduate. One researcher reports that by age 14, being older than average for a grade was a strong predictor of dropping out. Also, a long-term study of school dropouts, reports that being held back one grade increases the risk of dropping out later by 40-50 percent, two grades by 90 percent. Even children who repeat one or two elementary grades may experience the consequences of that decision more acutely when they reach adolescence.

Repeating a grade has the most serious effect on low socioeconomic, minority, and disabled students. Because low socioeconomic, minority, and handicapped children tend to score lower on standardized tests, these already vulnerable children are most likely to be retained in grade, especially when promotion depends on scoring at a specified level on such a test. The consequence is increased educational inequality since retention leads to undermining further the educational achievement and increases the likelihood of dropping out. Low-achieving students face special problems when policies on retention intersect with the special education system. On one hand, some handicapped students may be held back rather than identified as disabled and referred for evaluation for special education services. On the other hand, low-achieving students who are not disabled may be misclassified in special education as a way of "protecting" them from the impact of retention.

The financial costs of retention present enormous burdens to local school systems. The greatest financial impact is felt in cities with high percentages of low socioeconomic and minority students where tough promotion standards can trigger retention of up to half of the students in one grade. When large numbers of students are held back, school systems must shoulder two types of costs: retention costs--providing students with an extra year of education--and remediation costs--providing students held back with additional instructional support. This practice can be very expensive with no guarantee of improved achievement. Since research has shown that retention

with remedial help is a questionable solution, paying combined retention and remedial costs is poor value for the money.

"In summary," the researchers conclude, "holding students back as a strategy to improve student achievement is suspect at best and damaging at worst. Beware of any promotion policy which results in increased numbers of students repeating a grade. The greater likelihood of slowed academic progress, coupled with increased chances of dropping out, puts these students at risk" (National Coalition of Advocates for Students June 1986, p. 3).

The National Coalition of Advocates for Students printed a short questionnaire (June 1986) titled Does Retention Ever Make Sense? This school self-assessment is shown in exhibit 5.

The Massachusetts Advocacy Center presents several relevant recommendations for reducing student dropout that are summarized here briefly:

- Nonpromotion should be eliminated as an option in the middle grades; instead students should be placed in age-appropriate grades and provided necessary remedial assistance to acquire basic skills.

- Structural changes in middle schools should be instituted (for example, multiage grouping within clusters) that reduce the stigma of students who are overage for grade. A continuous student progress plan and introduction of cooperative learning approaches can reduce student isolation.

- All students age 16 or older in middle schools should be immediately offered a place in an alternative program; these students are clearly in imminent danger of dropping out.

- Annual "school profiles" should be prepared that indicate the number of students who are behind their age-appropriate grade for 2 or more years in each middle school. Publication of these data can benefit those of us who are designing programs for high-risk students.

Fortunately, we have choices when it comes to nonpromotion. In Los Angeles, for example, holding students back is viewed as a "last resort," used only when other options prove not to be in a student's best interest. Their local policies require parental consent for retention in kindergarten through six grade. This--and related changes in grading policies--puts the responsibility on the teacher to explain to students and parents the reasons for unsatisfactory performance and what needs to be done to prevent failing grades beyond the second grade. The intent of each of these policies is for students to arrive at the middle school level with a strong self-image and without a history of repeated failure.

Other middle school practices view organizational reforms as options to nonpromotion, for example, organization of students by "clusters" (rather than grades) and multiage groupings. In "clusters" or "streams," students progress at a pace that suits their unique learning style; call it a "Continual Pupil Progress Plan." It still reflects what we learned in Teacher Education 101, namely that 90 percent of the students can learn similar materials if schools allow slower learners more time to learn (Wheelock 1986b).

EXHIBIT 5

DOES RETENTION EVER MAKE SENSE?

While holding students back is clearly not useful as a strategy to improve general student achievement, it may work in helping individual students. Some research findings show that certain children can benefit from repeating a grade. If you can check "yes" to the following statements about your child or a student in your class, you may be able to keep that individual child in the same grade a second year with some success.

___ The student is in the early grades (K-2).

___ The student made some progress during the year. (If your child has had serious problems with school work, special services, not retention, may be more appropriate.)

___ The student has social skills appropriate for his or her age, has a good self-concept, and has adjusted well emotionally to school. (Again, if your child has behavioral problems, help can either be worked into the regular classroom setting or special services provided; retaining him or her is not likely to be helpful.)

___ The student's parents think retention is a good idea and are willing to work with the student and the school.

___ The student's teacher has had a good relationship with the child during the year. (Research shows that retention is most likely to work when the teacher recommending retention also likes the child.)

___ The program to be offered the student during the second year is different from the program previously offered. (The teacher and principal should be able to describe exactly what will be offered and why they think the new program--including different materials, smaller classes, or a new teaching approach--will help the students.)

If you cannot answer "yes" to these standards, you should strongly consider alternatives to a second year in grade, including special services or promotion with remedial help.

SOURCE: National Coalition of Advocates for Students June 1986.

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The best alternative is to prevent student failure through a variety of reform strategies. Such strategies include early childhood education programs, especially for poor, minority, and disabled children; an "effective schools" approach focusing on building-level improvements that emphasize safety, high expectations, and frequent checks on student progress; delayed school entry or a "readiness first grade" for children who have had minimal school preparation; and the option of a second year of kindergarten for children with fall birthdays.

Policies and programs that are immediate alternatives also must be considered--for example, research clearly shows that promotion plus remediation promotes greater achievement than holding students back. Remedial instruction should use different approaches from ones that have already failed, for example, promotion plus a well-designed summer program that emphasizes enrichment and remediation in smaller classes. Such a program could offer an alternative approach to learning. The emphasis should be on more than passing a particular achievement test and should not require the

passing of a test at the end of the summer for promotion (National Coalition of Advocates for Students June 1986).

There are two other relevant concepts: *double promotion and academic acceleration.* The RE-CAP program in Boston is a middle-grade alternative for retained students (National Coalition of Advocates for Students June 1986). The intent is to motivate these students to meet school standards and stay in school. The program first identifies middle school students who are up-to-4 years behind their appropriate grade. With parents' approval, these students sign an individual contract that commits them to meeting all school attendance, academic, and behavioral requirements. The contracts also contain a community service component requiring students to volunteer in a human service agency. If the students live up to the terms, *they are promoted twice in 1 year:* one grade at midyear and the next grade at the end of the year. Schools or human service agencies provide part-time staff who monitor attendance and behavior and advocate on behalf of individual support services including counseling and activity groups.

The concept is based on the realization that most students in the program can, with encouragement, do the work required to pass their courses. The promise of catching up with peers motivates them to meet standards. Because RE-CAP is not a "pull-out" program but instead offers support for vulnerable students within the mainstream, students do not feel stigmatized. Moreover, a "no-fail" provision is built in; even students not promoted in mid-year are not retained in grade a second time. RE-CAP, however, does not have a 100 percent success rate, in part because it works with students at substantial risk and in part because the high schools do not offer a parallel support structure for RE-CAP students entering ninth grade in midyear. However, it does represent a promising model for middle schools who must reengage older at-risk students. (For more information about RE-CAP, including a sample contract, contact the RE-CAP Director, District B Office, 60 Hawthorn Street, Boston, MA 02131.)

According to Willis (1986), the concept of academic acceleration increasingly is being used as an alternative to "remediation." The substitution connotes a more positive designation for the process of assisting low-achieving students. A more basic reason, however, is the fact that in order for youth to increase their performance, academic acceleration is actually required. The essential ingredients are increased engagement time for students on significant academic tasks, sufficient repeated practice for mastery, careful monitoring by teachers, and recognition of academic performance.

Computer-assisted instruction also can be an aid to academic acceleration. If courseware is selected carefully, students may learn basic skills at an accelerated pace. Also, the absence of demonstrations of adult impatience during periods when students are engaged with the computer is significant. For many students who have become hostile toward adults, periods of computer-assisted instruction may alleviate these tensions. In combination, these approaches have the promise of accelerating the academic performance of low-performing students. However, it is essential that adequate planning and evaluation accompany the approach in order for successful acceleration to occur.

Discipline and Orderliness

When we spoke of climate we touched on discipline. Since it is somewhat inevitable that normal adolescent development will result in increased conflict between teachers and students, we can make conscious choices regarding our preferred responses. We can, on one hand, focus on direct disciplinary actions to correct and control misbehavior. On the other hand, we can intervene with extra support for individual students, realizing that disciplinary problems may reflect a student's emotional needs and/or learning problems; in other words, we can increase school improvement efforts and mobilize services to help students adjust to school rules and control difficult impulses. As with other issues, undoubtedly this is not an either/or situation. We have to look at in-school factors that may be causing problems. These, after all, are the factors that we can control. We need to stop sending negative messages that leave students with only two choices: either continuing in an unwelcoming setting or leaving.

The application of discipline policy, if not carefully monitored, can be arbitrary and subjective and can result in the exclusion of our most vulnerable students. One of the problems is that disciplinary policies often contain such vague terms as "disruptive" or "disrespectful." These terms are subject to interpretation and may or may not distinguish violent behavior from "upsetting" behaviors (e.g., being in the hall without a pass). When we are unable to deal with discipline as an integral part of a positive environment, we often fall back on repressive measures. The clearest message, perhaps, is that discipline is not a goal in itself but rather is achieved through a combination of goals--academic, organizational, and interpersonal. Wayson et al. (as cited by the Center for Early Adolescence 1984) find that well-disciplined schools share these common goals:

- To improve the ways in which school staff work together to solve problems
- To reduce authority and status differences among all persons in the school
- To widen students' sense of belonging
- To improve the physical facilities and organizational structure of the school that reinforces other goals

Rutter and his colleagues (1979) find that behavior is better in schools characterized by *consistent values* agreed upon and supported by staff acting together rather than left for individual teachers to work out for themselves. Effective middle schools, Lipsitz (1984) observes, share a clarity of mission, have a close student-adult relationship, provide an intimate-caring environment for both students and staff, have a high degree of student participation in the "workings" of the school, reflect high but flexible expectations for students, and provide diverse opportunities for achieving success.

A National Institute of Education study cited by Dorman (1985), reveals that the single most important difference between safe and violent schools is a strong, dedicated principal who serves as a role model for both students and teachers and who institutes a firm, fair, and consistent system of discipline. Moreover, structure and clear limits are essential. Dorman and her colleagues (1985) maintain that schools which are responsive to the adolescent's need for structure have clearly stated rules and expectations that are accepted and understood by students and staff. One way of ensuring acceptance is to involve students in establishing rules and the consequences

for failing to observe them. Adolescents need the security provided by clear limits in order to learn during a time of pervasive change. Schools, however, need to avoid rigid structure and excessive limits, for these only invite dependency, hostility, and withdrawal.

Although schools use a variety of corrective measures to achieve student compliance with adult norms, little systematic research has explored the effects of various methods of direct discipline--what results are achieved, with whom, under what circumstances, and for how long. Rutter et al. (1979) found that the few studies undertaken about patterns of discipline emphasize that discipline and punishment should not be seen as synonymous. Improved behavior appears to result from reducing the number of rules combined with increased monitoring and enforcing of the remaining rules. However, as Rutter and his colleagues conclude, it seems possible that different patterns of discipline may be needed for children of different ages.

Wayson et al. (as cited by the Center for Early Adolescence 1984) point out that well-disciplined schools need not attempt to eliminate all discipline problems since some may be healthy responses of students needing to test their environment, protect their self-esteem, or vent emotions.

The consensus seems to be that improved climate in middle schools can improve discipline with the added benefit of reducing dropout rates. Lipsitz (1984) identifies numerous aspects of middle school climate that support improved discipline. Although she promotes no single model, she nevertheless notes that effective middle schools share a number of common characteristics. Exhibit 6, adapted from her work, presents a checklist that can be used to rate potential for promoting discipline and orderliness in a way that effectively complements the developmental needs of young adolescents.

A number of alternative approaches are being used by teachers throughout the country. The following are just a few more choices to consider:

- Providing inservice training in communications skills based on approaches of reality therapy, teacher effectiveness training, or transactional analysis
- Assigning staff responsibilities for developing creative discipline programs
- Using effective teachers who have few discipline problems as models for newer teachers

Other program delivery options include the following:

- The self-contained class, an in-school model designed for disruptive students that employs behavior modification programs, incentives, counseling, and remedial or tutorial services.
- A separate school or center, a more comprehensive alternative, that often uses tokens or point systems to improve student behavior, identify progress, and determine when a student should exit the program.

EXHIBIT 6

DISCIPLINE CHECKLIST

Physical Setting

____ Students care for the school by contributing to its upkeep as part of their learning.

____ Space is planned so that students are not crammed into classrooms.

____ To school visitors, it appears there are fewer students than one might expect from enrollment figures.

Order

____ Order is based on students and teachers liking each other and sharing a sense of community.

____ Students have more independence than in elementary school but operate within the structure of a support group (house, cluster, wing, advisory group).

____ Students have the opportunity for an ongoing relationship with at least one adult.

____ Students are grouped in units small enough so that the staff know the students' moods.

____ Student groups are stabilized by extending the time students stay together during the day and over a period of several years.

____ Every student has the chance for success in some activity.

____ Students participate in setting their own rules.

Teachers' Working Conditions

____ Teachers see the administration as concerned about them as individuals.

____ Level of motivation and mutual support is high.

____ Teachers are not isolated from each other.

Beliefs and Expectations

____ Teachers have high expectations for themselves and believe they can make a difference.

____ Members of the school community--adults and students--expect their day-to-day experiences to be positive.

____ A sense of personal mission and collegiality are central.

____ School staff recognize that a mutual give and take in human growth and development is the basis for the school community.

____ Teacher expectations of students are not tied to race, sex, or social class.

SOURCE: Adapted from Lipsitz, 1984, pp. 167-203.

NOTE: A more detailed checklist, the Middle Grades Assessment Program by Gayle Dorman, can be obtained from the Center for Early Adolescence, Carr Mill Mall, Suite 223, Carrboro, NC 27510.

- Telecommunications alternative to expulsion--an alternative designed for students who are expelled from school--uses a telecommunications network that links a teacher by telephone to students at home; students periodically meet at

the program site to take tests, turn in assignments, and receive materials. (Florida Department of Education 1986)

Still other optional program components include the coordination of such support services as mental health, family counseling, and health and economic services; a high degree of coordination with law enforcement, juvenile justices, and the rehabilitative services; and delinquency prevention or law education programs to help students understand the consequences of delinquent behavior.

In addition, there is one extremely unique and inventive classroom management technique that, although it clearly deals with discipline and school climate, goes far beyond that in its attempt to create student teamwork for superior classroom morale. This technique is called "Learnball." The approach was developed by Earl Bradley, a classroom teacher in Pennsylvania who, with the help of many other teachers, has "fine tuned" it over several years. Learnball has been described as "a strong educational medicine mixed with just enough sweetener to make it palatable" (Marwood, McMullen, and Murray 1986, p. 56). The medicine primarily is discipline--along with cooperation. Learnball teams are established that are highly cohesive, family-like support groups. The "sweetener" is a modified sports format--individualized participation and consensus--that appeals to all students. The Learnball approach uses peer social approval as a reward. A foam ball and hoop are used (sparingly) to create the sports format. Classroom rules become the rules of the sport. This produces positive behavioral changes, especially in students who have acquired negative habits. Classwork becomes a cooperative endeavor in which fast learners earn peer esteem for superior effort and slower students are rewarded for learning attempts. An important feature is that all students, regardless of ability, receive learning reinforcement from their peers. (The approach, incidentally, is consistent with the recognition of "heroes," as discussed earlier.) In essence, Learnball is based on several theoretical/operational precepts:

- Giving students opportunities to lead learning activities provides substantial reinforcement benefits, since student social approval is more valued by students than teacher approval.

- Contests provide opportunities to combine social and task communications; such a combination facilitates the establishment of a satisfactory social-emotional equilibrium.

- Separating individual achievement from team achievement is in accord with the cultural expectations of distributive justice inherent in this country's social fabric; a student can go all-out scholastically without being rebuked by other students for working too hard.

- Small prizes provide a meaningful pay-off in intergroup contests and are a tangible symbol of the results of group cooperative efforts; for this reason, they are valuable in the strengthening of group norms.

- Students who choose their own groups and leaders can form a stronger consensus with the teacher; giving students a voice in decision making results in greater support of whatever agreement is finally reached.

- o Maintaining permanent subgroups makes it easier for students to solve the problems of group structure; the stable subgroup presents a less complicated set of social relationships than a single classroom group or subgroup that changes members frequently. (Bradley 1986, p. 17)

According to Learnball users the benefits are numerous: increased time-on-task, greater student involvement, and more positive attitudes. It is not uncommon to hear such expressions as "unprecedented enthusiasm" and "new-found excitement" to describe what takes place in the classroom.

Bradley and his colleagues have formed Learnball League International to disseminate the model that is described in three resources. *Teamwork Handbook* is a learn-by-doing manual. To begin the process, students follow the handbook and use it throughout the year as a reference guide to procedures. Because Learnball is almost totally performed by the students and because it is a management technique, the teacher continues to teach in the same manner using the same materials as before. The second manual, *Basic Principles of Learnball*, explains the origin and dynamics of Learnball. The *Staff Development Guide* outlines the teacher-to-teacher dissemination activities that are an integral part of the process. The league also lends support to teachers through a telephone hotline and a quarterly newsletter. (For more information and for descriptive materials, contact Learnball League International, P.O. Box 18221, Pleasant Hills, PA 15236-0221.)

Tracking and Testing

The National Coalition of Advocates for Students (1985) conducted a series of hearings in 10 cities to explore the problems facing at-risk youth. Among other findings, the National Coalition concluded that abuses of tracking and ability grouping have been widespread; that the benefits have been questionable; and that the students who are most at risk because of their race, sex, class, language, or handicapping condition are the primary victims. Their report cites Goodlad's thought-provoking finding that minority students and those from the low-socioeconomic groups are found in disproportionate numbers in classes at the lowest track, whereas children from upper socioeconomic levels are consistently overrepresented in higher tracks.

The Massachusetts Advocacy Center calls tracking and ability grouping "the most pernicious" practice contributing to school failure, a practice--they contend--that begins long before the middle grades but whose effects are clearly apparent in those grades. The experience, we know, of being labeled inferior is not new for many young adolescents. For many, opportunities for success have been severely limited for most of their short lives.

This is a very complex issue because, as the National Coalition observes, if tracking and ability grouping were used--as proponents claim--to match instruction and resources more effectively, schools would be offering students more flexibility, remediation, and chances to change tracks. In other words, they argue that schools would assign students to relatively fluid learning groups on the basis of their understanding of and achievement in a subject at a given time (National Coalition of Advocates for Students 1985). Schools also would evaluate students' skills and knowledge at more frequent intervals. According to their rate of progress, students showing gains would be moved to another group. The National Coalition states that "if this were the case,

schools which assign students to different level ability and interest groups for different subjects would be the norm" (p. 43). It is not now the norm, according to the National Coalition--which also claims that most schools use tracking or ability grouping to group students at the same level in all subjects. In practice, the groups tend to stay fixed. Even when curriculum is shared across groups, the nature of instruction often differs for each group.

Research in this area is enlightening, for it shows that ability grouping often determines the content of what teachers teach, what students learn, the amount of time devoted to learning, and the quality of teaching. As the year goes on, students in the lower group fall behind students in the higher group. Goodlad (1983a, 1983b) reports that even in the span of 1 year, students in least advanced groups may have learned at a rate five times slower than those in the most advanced groups. He also stresses that students in low groups gradually become isolated within a school--just what we don't want to happen.

In one of the most comprehensive summaries of research on tracking to date, Oakes (1985) reports the lack of evidence to support either the educational or social benefits of tracking. She indicates that by the time students reach adolescence, tracking appears to result in lowered self-esteem and aspirations. Students tracked into the lower/slower groups experience higher suspension rates that, as we know, subsequently contribute to alienation and withdrawal. Moreover, these students are not "dummies;" they understand both their rank in the hierarchy and their marginal status. As Goodlad indicates, students placed in slower groups not only advance more slowly but also develop problems of greater misconduct in school, greater delinquency out of school, and higher dropout rates.

Because tracking is not inevitable, we need to explore alternatives. For example, Goodlad reports the success of the mastery learning approach in which students learn cooperatively with more able students helping slower students in heterogeneous small groups. Cooperative learning teams also provide low achievers the chance to feel successful, whereas, at the same time, students who learn more quickly deepen their understanding of the subject matter by explaining it to others.

The national coalition of Advocates for Students (1985), however, points out a troubling Catch 22. They observe that a trend toward generalizing the practice of tracking is emerging with "option" or "magnet" programs designed specifically for higher-achieving students. Their open hearings reveal evidence that, although some magnet programs have been used to promote desegregation, a resegregation effect also appears to be associated with them. If this is the case, we must weigh our options very carefully.

The Massachusetts Advocacy Center report quotes the director of an alternative middle school who cogently sums up this issue when he says our major job is to "unlabel" youth--and "unless we create some bonding, we're not going to go anywhere" (Wheelock 1986b, p. 46).

Testing (or the misuses of testing) is closely related to tracking. Although as teachers, counselors, and principals you are immersed in testing every day, several policy considerations are appropriate. As the National Coalition report points out, norm-referenced standardized tests are part of the "yearly ritual." Also, in a number

of states, such tests have been adopted as the basis for assessing students for promotion and graduation. One of the problems is that the overreliance on such testing may harm students whose scores are low or who attend schools where competency tests are used for promotion. Indeed, all children suffer when testing narrows the content of curriculum and encourages "teaching to the test."

One of the witnesses in the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (1985) hearings touches on the important point that competency tests, although often justified as a means of ensuring remedial help, do not guarantee that such help will be forthcoming. Neither do schools take sufficient precautions to protect students (who do not meet the standards) from being stigmatized as failures. The National Coalition report (1985) also declares that schools have been slow in making a substantial commitment of resources to those students who have experienced the most school discrimination in the past. Without this commitment, competency tests often become exclusionary devices.

Tests do not (cannot) measure enthusiasm, energy, and progress or whether students have learned to ask probing questions; often the result is a narrowing of the curriculum, a narrowing which threatens students' development and undermines their motivation. When testing replaces teaching, we can no longer respond to students' individual needs and the students no longer feel encouraged in the tasks of learning.

Roles of Parents and Families

One issue that educators at all levels agree about is the importance of parent and family involvement. The often-quoted *A Nation At Risk* report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) calls for active parental participation, asserting that it is a parent's right to demand the best in their children's education. Few would disagree that we need to have more active home-school communication in order to provide mutual support for young adolescents in handling a very difficult period in their lives. The increased communication can assist both parents and educators in establishing solid ground for bonding students more firmly to the schools.

Educational sociologists point out that changing family patterns have loosened the bonding with schools. Even among economically sound families, the changing patterns appear to contribute to the inclination toward truancy and dropping out (Johnston, Markle, and Harshbarger 1985). There is little doubt that the employment of both parents adds inordinate pressures on young adolescents. The challenges of pressing home tasks often take precedence over the family's educational and nurturing roles (Bronfenbrenner 1986).

For us to have more effective parental involvement, we need to believe that such involvement is essential. Our commitment must be more than lip service. Also, there is little question where the responsibility rests for taking the first steps. Parents generally await our guidance; they need to know what to do and how to do it. According to Sattes (1985), they do not always need a clearly defined role for their participation; simply being informed about their children's progress can make a difference.

The benefits of increased parental involvement have been reported widely. For example, Sattes (1985), in documenting the beneficial effects on attendance, achievement, motivation, behavior, and self-esteem, finds that parental involvement in almost any form improves student achievement; the higher the involvement, the greater the

achievement. The Committee for Citizens in Education (1986) also has developed a program of parental involvement that they call Drawing a Larger Circle. The notion implies an expanded role for parents and families.

Indeed, although the notion of "drawing a larger circle" is very appealing, a number of barriers must be overcome. Some of the major obstacles are summarized below:

- o Many parents lack training, especially if we ask them to teach children who may have severe learning problems.
- o Lack of training affects teachers choices about developing and implementing parental training programs.
- o Lack of trust and mutual support.
- o Lack of time and energy (this holds for both teachers who would need the time to prepare special program materials and for parents who also are limited by their own long list of responsibilities).
- o Differences in goals, expectations, and values as well as differences in education and income.
- o Fear of the unknown.
- o Teachers and principals being reluctant to become involved as they resent any interference.
- o Schools saying they want to work with parents but not providing any opportunities.
- o Teachers involving parents only when a problem comes up.
- o The lack of a firm system for involvement.

Nevertheless, we can do much to overcome these obstacles. Although the list sounds overwhelming, we are convinced that the positives outweigh the negatives. The basic ingredients for a successful program include the following: commitment, ongoing training for teachers and staff in communicating with parents, and a variety of options--carefully chosen--that make the most sense to the local school. Both teachers and parents need to see meaning in their involvement so that their joint efforts make a difference in the lives of students.

A number of interesting possibilities exist for staff development and training. For example:

- o Workshops that will enable staff to evaluate and decide on strategies for responding to parents' concerns about drug use, pregnancies, influence of gangs, and so forth, and how these relate to a student's decision to drop out of school

- o Training programs which will increase staff understanding and skills by suggesting conflict resolution strategies to deal with day-to-day disagreements between dropout-prone students and their parents

- o Teams of school personnel and parents that would assess how dropout prevention efforts are working and how they might be improved (National Committee for Citizens in Education 1986)

With regard to staff considerations, we also should consider establishing a position (either part- or full-time) for a "parent involvement coordinator" whose job would be to involve parents in all aspects of the life of the school.

Parent education and/or parent development programs can also be implemented. Not only does the staff need training, but parents also need opportunities to develop skills to be good partners with the school. Sattes (1985) illustrates an inservice workshop approach where parents learn how to help their children accomplish learning objectives; parents receive individualized help in working on program goals and eventually share in the benefits as a result of enhanced pupil achievement.

Various parent education activities are feasible. The National Congress of Parents and Teachers suggests that the following activities are valuable:

- o Conducting surveys to determine parents' needs and interests

- o Organizing parent centers or workplaces in the school

- o Conducting a series of How to Help Your Child Learn sessions that include topics on discipline, basic skills, and thinking skills

- o Organizing a "family reading" night

Perhaps the most important consideration in improving home/school communication is to conduct an assessment of the broader community context, that is, determine the influences present in the community.

- o What are the prevalent attitudes?

- o What are the resources?

- o What are the percentages of working mothers, single parent families, and "second-time-around" families?

We must be particularly sensitive to the family's needs, especially as we plan father-son and mother-daughter events. In addition, we should learn from parents what they believe their family goals are for their children. Whatever we do to build parents-as-allies relationships, we need to convey respect, provide realistic opportunities for involvement, and try to understand the family's viewpoints. We also need to be alert to what Lounsbury (n.d.) calls "non-conditional communication." Traditionally, there almost always has been a condition attached to communication with parents, that is, we usually ask for something (e.g., "come to a conference so we can tell you that your child isn't doing so well). Instead, Lounsbury suggests that we try sharing

a poem, an article, or a description of a culmination unit activity. Sending home an audiotape of a child's oral report, plus a tape player, would be a delightful twist.

Other activities to enhance communication include inviting parents to organize social gatherings for students, offering school tours for parents, providing a school information directory, holding conferences with the student present and actively involved, assigning each parent a contact person in the school, and establishing a "homework hotline" (Bergmann March-April 1986). We should use the mail and the telephone to communicate both when there is and isn't a problem. Whatever the case, communication should be conducted in a nonthreatening manner and should be two-way with opportunities for parents to communicate with more than just their signature.

Other specific practices can be employed to involve parents. One of the most important tasks is administrative support to provide staff freedom from excessive nonprofessional duties. This support must include a respect for time teaching, planning, or preparing (Lounsbury n.d.). In terms of information sharing, the National Parent Teachers Association suggests sending home monthly class booklets containing students' work, highlights of recent units of study, a calendar of plans for each month and overviews of topics to be studied, and also preserving student accomplishments on videotape. Parents also should be involved as classroom resource persons and as volunteers in areas where extra personnel could make a difference.

Home visits, particularly early in the school year, can help lay the groundwork for communication throughout the year. Some schools provide release time and substitute teachers to facilitate this activity; some set up half-days for this purpose; still others allocate full days when there are no classes scheduled. Sometimes intervention specialists visit homes and counsel parents on how to help their children become more motivated. Some have even employed "Welcome Wagons" of school staff and parents visiting newcomers. This is an important form of "bonding" for adults. Special attention must be focused on the needs of working parents. Some possibilities include arranging field trips to the workplace, if appropriate, and seeing if employers would donate needed resources, as appropriate.

Contracts between teachers and parents have also been tried successfully. The contract is a formal agreement to complete a set of activities (Becker and Epstein 1981). As with other contracts, these are periodically reviewed and modified. Although they are not widely used, they have been successful in improving academic achievement and strengthening home-school bonds (Lounsbury n.d.).

According to Lounsbury, such contracts may call for specific pledges with signatures from three parties--students, teachers, and parents. Typically, they call for specific responsibilities on everyone's part: for example, parents to see that the child goes to school each day on time unless real illness prevents, teachers to notify parents as well as students of grading and homework policies, and students to complete assignments on time. Individual teachers or an entire school may establish a formal contract program. In either case, careful planning is essential. As Lounsbury cautions, the use of contracts entail considerable effort and should not be entered into lightly. Becker and Epstein (1981) also identify two contract techniques. In one, parents are asked to provide or withhold privileges or punishments to the child based on school performance and behavior patterns that may be determined jointly by the parent, teacher, and student; in the second, parents are asked to supervise or assist the

students' homework or other projects. In addition, advisory committees can assist in a number of areas:

- o Helping to set program goals and assessing their attainment
- o Helping to develop policies as appropriate (on such concerns as discipline, suspension, or retention)
- o Helping to revise report cards
- o Providing input on the evaluation process for teachers and administrators

Home-based parental involvement programs are another option. Such programs could include homework assignments involving parents. However, care must be taken not to put parents in an awkward position. Detailed instructions, providing steps to follow or questions to ask can involve parents in nonthreatening ways. Also, the parent-as-tutor model can include reviewing homework or practicing drill-type materials. Last, it is important to equip parents with observational and instructional skills including instruction for parents in teaching and making learning materials that can be used to supplement work at school; classroom observations to see how teaching occurs in school and how children respond to particular methods; and parental responses to teachers' questionnaires to evaluate their own child's progress or problems.

Established criteria for assessing the effectiveness of parent involvement activities is imperative. Signs of changed attitudes, increased home-school cooperation, and increased student motivation are examples. There should also be signs of a lessening of alienation among students. Further, research evidence of decline in dropout rates and evidence of improved performance are recommended (National Committee for Citizens in Education 1986).

The Home and School Institute is an outstanding resource for assisting schools with developing better relationships between schools and families. (The Institute's Special Project Office, located at 1201 16th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036, can be of great service.)

Roles of the Community and Community Organizations

Victor Herbert, assistant superintendent for Dropout Prevention in New York City, contends that the presence in schools of community-based organizations (CBOs) offers a step toward freeing the schools to do their job ("Case Management" n.d.). Herbert submits that since schools cannot do it all, school-community partnerships promise some remedy. In fact, he notes that the "case management" approach has begun to demonstrate its effectiveness. As Herbert observes, involving the private sector enhances the formula compounded to ease the pain of suffering that stops so many children from attaining society's minimum entrance credential, the high school diploma. Incidentally, "case management" is a comprehensive approach that bolsters the ability of schools to deal with high-risk students. The approach brings together teachers, other school staff, and human service providers so that students can receive assistance--at the school--in dealing with a multitude of problems (educational, medical, legal, financial) that might otherwise contribute to their dropping out.

The New York City guidelines in this area suggest that when deciding how best to provide dropout prevention program components, schools will find that some of the targeted students require a type of service not commonly offered in schools. In these instances, schools may find that a CBO (defined as a public or not-for-profit private agency, citywide, or neighborhood-based organization) may be a more suitable provider. Many CBOs are able to offer services to limited-English proficient students in their native languages more easily than schools. Undoubtedly, the broadest possible "human-centered support base" enhances young adolescents' sense of bonding with the community.

There is little question that community involvement is an essential ingredient for preparing students with both academic and employability skills. By combining efforts, the school and community can realize goals that are mutually beneficial. Schools benefit by having the traditional classroom environment take on new life; the community benefits when it broadens the focus of educational programs so that educational and employment needs of the community can be met. Both benefit when students are motivated to work--in school and later on the job--to become productive members of society.

As with other potentially valuable programs, there are barriers that must be overcome to achieve success. For example, one survey on state educational commissions (Smith and Hester 1985) reports that only a minority of these commissions saw any reason to involve the schools with other public agencies that have programs and expertise designed to deal with the external problems of at-risk youth. Only 2 of the 54 responding commissions saw any role for social services or employment and training linkages; only 1 checked law enforcement and mental health; none saw a role for substance abuse agencies working with the schools. Also, the Appalachian Regional Commission (1987) reports a significant lack of awareness both of the scope of the dropout problem and the role the community can play in reducing that problem.

Identifying potential obstacles is the first step in overcoming them. Fortunately, many ways exist to facilitate school-community involvement. The following factors, identified by Bhaerman (1987), should aid in identifying the major barriers:

- Access--Successful involvement does not occur unless groups have access to one another and open lines of communication.

- Awareness--Involved organizations must be familiar with the characteristics and needs of the groups with which they hope to become involved.

- Incentives--Anticipated rewards and other visible benefits should create an inducement to establish ties.

- Systematic planning--This can only be done when organizations take clearly defined steps to consider a range of options, and gradually build a consensus that all can support.

- Team building--Team building requires defining roles and responsibilities and preparing thoroughly. It also requires sensitivity, mutual respect, and creative leadership.

- Time investment--A continuous investment of time often is needed to make involvement work. Only when groups realize that involvement is to their mutual advantage can sufficient commitment of time and resources be generated to ensure success.

- Trust--A variety of means can be used to build trust, including ensuring that all information exchanged is accurate and unbiased.

The potential community groups with which we can work are extremely diverse. The community, in effect, is composed of many subpopulations that are not mutually exclusive. We can create a "community yellow pages" beginning with the following:

- Business and industry--large manufacturing corporations and service and utility companies, business and trade associations, chambers of commerce, business-sponsored civic groups, Private Industry Councils in the JTPA system

- Community-based organizations--national ethnic advancement organizations; national client-oriented organizations; local multipurpose community action agencies, cooperatives, and economic development agencies; local private community organizations

- Civic and quasi-political organizations--Urban Coalition, League of Women Voters, Kiwanis, Lions, lodges, fraternal organizations, and other service clubs

- Civil rights groups--National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Urban League, local civil rights commissions, human relations boards, Opportunities Industrialization Centers, American Civil Liberties Union

- Government agencies--city, township, or village government agencies; county social services departments

- Labor organizations--American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations, state and local affiliates as well as central labor bodies

- Professional groups--American Vocational Association, American Medical Association

- Religious organizations--local clergy associations, individual congregations, regional denominational offices, national and regional groups

- Service clubs (and other special interest groups)--business and professional clubs, fraternal organizations

- United Way- or United Fund-sponsored organizations (including youth organizations)--health agencies, social service agencies, YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Explorers, Campfire Girls, Boys Clubs of America, Girls Clubs of America, 4-H Clubs

There are three points to consider when identifying community resources:

(1) Decide whether to use a "top-down" or "bottom-up" approach. Top-level endorsements from an organization may open many doors but--at least at the outset--may not be absolutely essential.

(2) Use a combination of approaches when collecting needed information about community agencies, for example, personal interviews supplemented with telephone interviews and/or a mail questionnaire to reach a large number of groups in a short time.

(3) Compile a comprehensive resource directory. Such a directory typically includes the group's previous experience in school-community involvement, as well as services offered by community organizations.

The New York City guidelines (New York City Public School System 1986) listed a number of specific services to enhance each school's instructional and supportive capacities, for example: **outreach services** (e.g., family outreach/referrals, outreach in family's native language); **guidance and counseling** (e.g., family counseling, intergenerational activities); **health services** (e.g., drug abuse counseling, crisis intervention); and **alternative educational programs** (e.g., tutorial and homework help, capacity to provide services in the student's native language).

The Appalachian Regional Commission (1987) adds to our list of options a series of "adoption programs":

- **Adopt-a-Child**--teachers, senior citizens, Big Brothers and Sisters provide special support for an at-risk student
- **Adopt-a-Family**--stable families; church, synagogue, and mosque organizations, and civic clubs work with less-stable families to help students stay in school
- **Adopt-a-Plan**--local, county, and the state government coordinate resources to address dropout prevention
- **Adopt-a-Program**--civic clubs, chambers of commerce, and the like provide recreation, social, and service opportunities for at-risk students

A brief note also should be added on the use of public relations techniques to generate community support. In New York City ("Case Management" n.d.) a number of techniques apparently have proven to be effective, for example, an ad campaign of bus and subway posters and spot radio announcements, as well as incentives to students in dropout prevention program schools (e.g., Random House provided 80,000 dictionaries to students entering the ninth grade; McDonalds provided 30,000 T-shirts for good attendance and achievement; and Sanyo offered 10,000 calculators for students with a perfect--passing all subjects--report card). Such activities were reported to have these positive effects: students felt adults were interested in their staying in school, the focus was on students as "winners not losers," and other community groups became involved (Schneider 1986).

Further, the role of youth groups in dropout prevention is all too often overlooked. As Phelps (1980) points out, early adolescence always has been a period of challenge for youth-serving organizations. The truth is, many youth groups have long had programs designed for our school-aged youth. These groups are in a favorable position to offer badly needed supportive services. At a time when these kids are spending more time with their peers than with their parents, many youth organizations provide a home-away-from-home where youngsters can be with friends and receive support from adults other than parents. This particularly is true of "building-based" organizations such as Girls Clubs, Boys Clubs, YWCA, and YMCA. These groups--as well as "nonbuilding-based" groups--provide recreational facilities needed by young adolescents.

Within the past few years, as Phelps indicates, programs increasingly are being developed outside the building, wherever the need demands, in housing projects, community storefronts, and the like. This process has encouraged more small-group activities and one-to-one counseling. A number of new delivery systems have been developed, for example, peer counseling by teen leaders in sex education programs, a central city drop-in center, and weekly rap sessions. The decision to reach all youth populations has brought traditionally rural organizations such as 4-H into cities and prompted traditionally suburban organizations such as Girl Scouts into working with migrant youth.

These new departures have stimulated youth groups to increase their linkages with other social organizations, including welfare departments and courts. Other new departures include alternative living situations--such as, homes to provide shelter for youth in need of supervision--and satellite schools for youth having a wide range of difficulties. Phelps (1980) also highlights special programs for young adolescent women in an effort to expand their horizons about their abilities, careers, and life opportunities. She also notes the collaborative efforts of a number of youth organizations that have come together to form the National Collaboration for Youth in order to speak collectively on policies affecting young people.

Thorough planning of dropout prevention in youth programs is critical. O'Connor (1985) lists several steps in his description of a multischool system cooperative program and how it was developed. The first step was to gather people interested in reducing the dropout rate. This was done by placing an announcement in a local newspaper serving four districts. The assembled group formed a commission (the San Luis Valley Commission) that drafted a mission statement and goals. The second step was finding sources of support. Preferring to channel financial resources through a clearinghouse, the commission solicited funds and services from several sources--nearby colleges, the state alcohol and drug abuse division, regional desegregation assistance, and similar groups. The third step was to find out what actually needed to be done. Here the commission scheduled public meetings to discuss the causes of dropping out. To get students involved, the commission planned a workshop to give students time to develop specific projects within their schools. The students opted for peer tutoring so that anyone having school or home problems could talk about it with another student. Last, each school system provided support for the student program.

The National Education Association's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (1987) recently distributed their second *A Blueprint for Success* document. This edition focused on "community mobilization for dropout prevention." The first publication, *A Blueprint for Success: Operation Rescue* (National Foundation for the

Improvement of Education 1986), addresses a number of essential principles for successful dropout prevention programs, including the following: collaboration to provide comprehensive services, student-centered education, training involving the entire school (and community), and the empowerment of collaborators and students, for example, the sense of ownership of their dropout prevention program.

The second blueprint (on community mobilization) resulted from a conference of representatives from educational, professional, minority, and business organizations together with experts having experience at mobilizing communities on various social and educational issues. The published result provides many theoretical as well as practical suggestions about how to begin, how to proceed, and with whom to work. It asks that each one of us take part, assume responsibility, and become leaders in an offensive thrust (National Foundation for the Improvement of Education 1987).

The four major blueprint components are mobilizing the individual (e.g., taking a leadership role), mobilizing coalitions (e.g., finding resources and moving forward), mobilizing the public (e.g., selecting the proper channels), and mobilizing the agencies (e.g., changing attitudes and restructuring the system). The blueprint is literally packed with one good idea after another. Some examples are as follows:

- Tailor the vision to the community ethos--don't use the same cookie cutter for every community's plan. (p. 8)

- Stop the finger-pointing and join together in sharing the control, the blame, and the credit--we must build and mobilize coalitions for dropout prevention. (p. 13)

- Find the sharks--listen--look for areas of agreement--discover some activity of joint involvement which could be gathering data about the disagreement. (p. 17)

- Bring the adversary to the table--at every conference or meeting involve the adversary . . . this is the person or group we have to change . . . opposing views are needed to shape the debate. (p. 17)

- Form an interagency planning group, including social service agency units--health, welfare, recreation, mental health, substance abuse, law enforcement, employment, and training. (p. 26)

The final section of the document, "Acting on the Vision," is particularly relevant in that it is concerned with "checking the cautions" and "charting the course." Some of the "cautions" noted are constraints on achieving objectives, starting the program with staff who can pull it off, watching for language difficulties, and so on. "Charting the course" talks about options. The list includes nine "routes" to follow:

- The events route (suggestions such as issue focus groups, teleconferences)

- The funding route (suggestions such as a public education fund, corporate contributions, public funds)

- The legal route (suggestions such as contracts with parents and students)

- o The peer support route (suggestions such as peer counseling for dropouts to learn from each other)

- o The policies/procedures route (suggestions such as numerical or percentage targets for dropout reduction, improved data collection and reporting, regular identification of potential dropouts)

- o The political route (suggestions such as resolutions, demonstrations, lobbying)

- o The recognition/incentives route (suggestions such as rewards for schools that significantly reduce the dropout rates over time, student rewards and recognition)

- o The special populations route (suggestions such as using special population adults as role models and establishing business counseling programs)

- o The program route (suggestions such as curriculum reforms and IEPs)

As the program route is more closely allied with our discussion, the following items (a partial list) are included:

- o Reform the curriculum with particular attention to the needs of the low-achieving, alienated students.

- o Match students and speed of learning--create individualized programs.

- o Push for comprehensive compensatory programs for all students who need them.

- o Establish a community-based school survival clinic designed to serve potential dropouts by providing individual and group counseling, linkage to social services, strategies in test taking, tutorial assistance, computer-assisted basic skills instruction, linkage to youth activities.

Although it may sound anticlimatic, two final points need to be mentioned briefly: evaluating school-community involvement and establishing a position of school-community coordinator. In evaluating school-community involvement projects, we need to be concerned with both processes and outcomes. Because expectations tend to exceed results in nearly all new undertakings, it is important to develop procedures that enable the best job to be done with the resources at hand. The outcomes then can be judged in relation to the resources and quality of the effort. The two broad types of evaluation to be considered are formative and summative. Formative evaluation allows "midcourse corrections" to ensure that the program is developing as it was conceived and is designed to provide continuous information in redirecting goals and procedures. Summative evaluation allows for planning effective future efforts and is designed with the end result or "bottom line" in mind. It distinguishes a program as successful or unsuccessful compared to a set of preestablished criteria or to the relative success or some other program.

The school-community involvement coordinator takes the lead in making involvement happen. No matter who coordinates this important process, he or she will need to perform the following nonmutually exclusive roles:

- **Broker.** In the role of a "go-between," coordinators need to find the right conditions that permit each group to be involved most efficiently. They need to monitor the process and at times intervene to resolve problems that arise.

- **Catalyst.** The role may simply be to ask the right question of the right person at the right time, or make the right suggestion. Coordinators initiate discussions and precipitate the involvement of others.

- **Facilitator.** Coordinators need to "make things happen." They must keep activities on target and on schedule. In short, they are responsible for planning, developing, and implementing the program. Fortunately, they do not, should not, have to "go it alone." Coordinators work within an active committee structure, especially as they assess the local climate for school-community involvement. (Bhaerman 1987)

Discussion Items

1. Consider those bonds formed by our students and determine which we, as educators, hold to be desirable and undesirable. Review cultural, ethnic, economic, and other factors and attitudes we hold, individually and collectively, that may impact our judgement. Further review our list and determine which "undesirable" bonds may actually work to enhance the students' bond with school.
2. When (in the student's development) does it seem most likely that social, economic, and family influences might be overcome? What types of significant intervention might be established to take advantage of this "ripe" time?
3. Enumerate the important characteristics of climate at our school. What are some of our strengths? weaknesses?
4. Review Johnston and de Perez's list of questions (p. 21) and answer them for our school.
5. What "rules" exist for our students? How are these clearly imparted to students?
6. What is our school's academic reward system?
7. How close do we come to achieving what Johnston and Markle indicate are the right major characteristics of a good climate? Also, who are our "heroes?" How did they get to be the "heroes?" What are the "stories" that circulate in our school network?
8. Answer the questions posed on pp. 23 and 24.
9. What school policies do we maintain that may, in fact, be "barriers to excellence?"
10. What conditions exist in our school which *promote* truancy?
11. In what form and to whom is our suspension data reported?
12. Review and discuss exhibit 5.
13. How can parents and families be more involved in our schools? (How can we "enlarge the circle?") What are the barriers we face? How can we overcome these barriers?

14. What staff development programs do we feel we need to consider with regard to "enlarging the circle?"
15. What parent education/parent development programs might we consider?
16. In general, how can we improve home-school communication?
17. What roles can community-based organizations (CBOs) legitimately play?
18. What roles can business/industry/labor groups legitimately play?
19. What are the various barriers and facilitators with regard to both CBOs and business/industry/labor groups?
20. With whom should we primarily focus our community linkages? What should determine our decision?
21. What is our "blueprint for success" with regard to community mobilization for dropout prevention? On which of the "nine routes" should we concentrate? What is our rationale?
22. How can we evaluate our school/community linkages?
23. Who should be responsible for school/community involvement? Do we need to establish a coordinator position?

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE TEACHING OF THE BASICS?

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HOW CAN WE IMPROVE TEACHING OF THE BASICS ?

The Relevant Curriculum and Instructional Issues

Curriculum and instruction are closely related to the dropout issue: dropout rates are directly related to measures of student achievement, particularly to reading scores (Hess 1987). Nearly all indicators point to lowering dropout rates by improving reading scores, although waiting until students are on the threshold of high school to concentrate on improving their achievement apparently is too late and will lead to more dropouts (Rice et al. 1987).

Willis (1986) cites a study of dropouts' suggestions of ways the system could have served them better; nearly one-fourth of the respondents indicates that the curriculum should have been more practical. Many educators attribute a considerable amount of youth's alienation to the emphasis on subject matter that has little relevance to the students' present or perceived future needs.

Middle grade students should be challenged intellectually through the use of multiple instructional strategies and a broadening of instructional techniques. We have all heard the call for individualized curriculum and instruction in order to prevent the sense of failure and low self-esteem in dropout-prone students. Yet, dropouts frequently complain that their teachers did too much lecturing and incorrectly assumed that all students are hungry to learn (Grossnickle 1986). Then, too, the practice of grouping students by ability for instructional purposes is not supported by the research; studies suggest that the practice has harmful effects on teacher expectations and instructional practices (especially for students in the lower-ability group), student perceptions of self and others, and academic performance of students of lower ability. It interferes with opportunities for students to learn from--and learn to accept--peers of different socioeconomic backgrounds and also may perpetuate notions of superior and inferior classes of citizens. The practice is especially antithetical to the goals and objectives of the middle school, according to Johnston and Markle (1986).

One of the discoveries to emerge from Goodlad's (1983a) research is what he calls "the sameness of form" in the curriculum. Adding a few subjects like the arts and physical education "creates some irregularities but does not fundamentally distort the symmetry" (p. 467). He sees a great amount of passive activity with students hardly even speculating on deeper meanings, discussing alternative interpretations, or engaging in projects that call for collaboration. Moreover, he observes, students rarely plan or initiate anything, read or write anything of substantial length, or create their own products.

Arth and his colleagues (1985) content that the reform movement completely overlooks the problems contemporary youth face in terms of the dramatic shifts in nurturing and rearing patterns in our society. Moreover, the absorption primarily with academic ends overlooks the self-esteem needs of youth. Natriello et al. (1985) also note that the reformist recommendations fall into three categories: course content (increased number of required academic courses), increased time for instruction, and stress on student achievement (measured by grades and/or standardized tests). According to their analysis, the assumptions on which these recommendations are based fail to consider dropout-prone students. They argue that implementing new curriculum requirements will

restrict the variation in the students' school experiences and curtail their choices. These students may have to face repeated failure with few chances to participate in school activities in which they might succeed. The researchers maintain that as standards are raised and at-risk students do not receive needed eradicating, they will more likely be frustrated and drop out. As far as increased length of school days and years are concerned, such demands may create added burdens for potential dropouts, many of whom are likely to have assumed increased job and/or family responsibilities. The increased time also may have the effect of preventing many youth from participating in extracurricular activities, again cutting off opportunities to bond with others.

The main problem is not that increasing time on school tasks is ineffective, but rather the problem is motivating students to spend the additional time on task. However, with regard to stress on student achievement, Natriello and his colleagues (1985) cite the results of research that provide some hope that raising standards will lead some students to work harder and that greater effort could lead to somewhat higher achievement. They recommend the following: that the effects on potential dropouts be considered in any assessments of the reforms, that educational services be offered with flexible time options, and that service to potential dropouts include special programs which have been proven successful, including individualized curricula and instructional approaches.

Middle school educators (such as Arth et al. 1985) call for a core curriculum that deals with major social issues, persistent life situations, and problems of living. Two of the major concepts on which they focus are extremely relevant to dropout prevention: integration and exploration. *Integration* implies that effective learning should combine a solid program in content and skill areas (with eradicating as needed) and the integration of intellectual and social skills into the students' repertoire of learning behaviors. *Exploration* implies that the curriculum should allow young adolescents to explore needs, interests, talents, and skills in numerous subject areas and to use them as a basis for attaining their educational goals. It is one of our jobs to help them do that. In spite of the relatively short-term interest on the part of many youth, a curriculum of exciting exploratory courses would be based on their development characteristics, such as trying out, risk taking, curiosity, self-exploration.

Curriculum and instruction in effective middle schools is noted for high academic learning time, frequent and monitored homework, coherently organized curriculum, variety of instructional strategies, and opportunities for student responsibility. Effective schools emerge from a complex set of factors that focus attention on academic performance, support academic growth in a manner consistent with the developmental stage of the youngster, and build an intellectual community that rewards and reinforces academic pursuits in its public rituals and in private interactions (Johnston and Markle 1986).

Johnston and Markle (1986) also suggest that the use of a diagnostic/prescriptive model with specific instructional objectives will improve middle school instruction and that student capabilities and prescribing learning activities relating to those objectives apparently has been shown to facilitate learning. Wehlage, Rutter, and Turnbaugh (1987) develop an even more focused program model for at-risk students. Although it is intended primarily for high school students, the model is sufficiently generic to adapt to our level. The model can be described in four categories: (1) administration and

organization (e.g., ideally 25-100 students working with 2-6 faculty), (2) teacher culture (e.g., joint decision making and cooperation), (3) student culture (e.g., program is voluntary, students apply but not all are accepted, those who are accepted, those who must explain why they feel attitude and behavior changes are needed), and (4) curriculum. The model assumes that curriculum and instruction must be substantially different--individualized, prompt feedback, concrete evidence of progress, and an active role for students. Dropout prevention literature is replete with the following specific curriculum strategies intended to enhance teaching of the basics:

- **Alternative curricula**--Such approaches are based on the belief that some students need alternative environments in order to succeed.

  --*Alternative classes* are designed to help students in specific areas while permitting them to remain in the overall mainstream.

  --*Alternative programs*, or "school-within-a-school," are programs developed to meet the special needs of identified groups of students. Such programs include special population programs, single grade alternative programs, and alternate schedule programs.

  --*Alternative schools* constitute a more comprehensive alternative and usually maintain separate facilities and staff (Cox et al. 1985).

- **Behavior modification**--Comprehensive behavior modification or management programs often are recommended for students who have histories of disruptive behavior. The environment is structured in such a way that the student receives frequent feedback regarding behavior and academic performance (Florida Department of Education 1986).

- **Continuous progress**--A system that enables students to move through a learning program on the basis of successful completion of objectives at their own rate without skipping or repeating a grade (Arth et al. 1985).

- **Environmental programs**--Such programs emphasize physical, experiential learning, and survival activities as a way to build self-confidence and motivate students to achieve. Basic skills instruction, community involvement, student volunteer programs, and interdisciplinary courses are typical components (Florida Department of Education 1986).

- **Independent study or contract learning**--These are learning activities in which the student is largely self-directed, although the teacher offers advice on the choice of goals, topics of study, methods, and evaluation of the experience (Arth et al. 1985).

- **Individualized instruction**--Individualized instruction can either help the student concentrate on other areas in which additional help is needed or provide enrichment where proficiency already has been established (Arth et al. 1985).

- **Interdisciplinary programs**--These instructional programs combine subject matter ordinarily taught separately (Arth et al. 1985).

- **Interdisciplinary teams**--Two to five teachers representing different subjects form a team that uses common student groups to organize their instructional program. The team shares the same students, schedule, areas of the school, and occasionally the responsibility for teaching more than one subject (Arth et al. 1985).

- **Magnet schools**--These schools often emphasize an accelerated academic program or one that concentrates on a particular academic area or special talent (Florida Department of Education 1986).

- **Modular schedule**--This scheduling strategy uses small amounts of time that can be linked together to form periods of various lengths. Course times and activities are assigned variable time periods depending on the kinds of learning activities that have been planned to meet learning needs on particular days (Arth et al. 1985).

- **Minicourses**--These short-term courses, often nonacademic and usually in an exploratory program, may last 4-12 weeks. Examples include computer literacy, electronic music, and other interests common among young adolescents (Arth et al. 1985).

- **Schools without walls**--Instruction takes place at various locales around the community. Teachers make extensive use of community resources and professional services; students may spend little time in traditional classes (Florida Department of Education 1986).

- **Street academies**--Located in nontraditional facilities within the community, street academies offer programs designed for alienated students and dropouts (Florida Department of Education 1986).

- **Theme schools**--The curriculum is centered around a particular theme such as sports, space, animals, or art. Teachers plan as teams and develop interdisciplinary units that teach academic concepts by relating them to the theme (Florida Department of Education 1986).

- **Unified arts/allied arts**--This coordinated program provides exploratory opportunities in the humanities, practical arts, and fine arts (Arth et al. 1985).

A number of relevant curricula also have been developed that relate to life-coping and living skills that are related to some of the problems of young adolescents, particularly those who are dropout prone. The Adkins Life Coping Skills Model (Adkins 1974) is both a program area and an innovative method of teaching. The program area is defined by the sets of normal vocational, social, and personal problems that individuals experience at all stages of their lives and that, if handled effectively, lead to the full satisfying use of their talents. However, if they are unresolved, they could impede normal development. The program--basically a curriculum for teaching problem-solving skills--employs a combination of methods. A problem-centered structured inquiry method provides a series of preplanned, open-ended, structured learning experiences with materials that can be implemented by teachers and counselors.

Another exciting program has been developed by Quest International Center in Granville, Ohio. Quest International is based on the realization that schools must be

concerned with many aspects of the young adolescents' social development that complement cognitive development. For example, some of the aspects of the former include learning to appreciate one's own talents and potential; learning to set personal and intellectual goals, to develop plans for achieving those goals, and to persevere; and learning to accept responsibility for one's behavior (Crisci 1986). Quest International was formed a decade ago to equip youngsters between the ages of 10 and 18 with skills for successful living and learning. Over the years, a wide range of teachers' manuals, student workbooks, and textbooks for grades 6-12, inservice teacher training workshops, and parent seminars have been developed.

We cannot overlook the role extracurricular activities can play in dropout prevention. Many middle school educators (e.g., George and Oldaker 1985-1986) point out that effective middle schools provide extracurricular and intramural athletic activities for all students and that such activities can be useful in establishing school spirit. As long as they do not create inordinate, divisive competition, we must look closely at our various intramural programs, clubs, and exploratory classes to see how we can involve dropout-prone students. The key is not to exclude anyone. Young at-risk adolescents need social experiences with adults who exemplify characteristics of responsibility, the work ethic, and the ability to build positive human relationships. Those qualities can be taught through planned experiential learning programs (Wehlage, Rutter, and Turnbaugh 1987). In such programs, students typically are involved as volunteers at day care centers, elementary schools, or centers for the handicapped. This places them in meaningful work, in jobs that need to be done, and in settings that are real. Older students can be involved in internships in hospitals and with various social service agencies. It may be possible to adapt--as well as adopt--some of these ideas for our younger students.

Caught in the Middle (n.d.) is a very comprehensive report on educational reform for young adolescents in California that deals with a broad array of recommended practices for middle grades. Instructional practice, the report points out, should emphasize active learning strategies consistent with the goals of a core curriculum and the developmental characteristics of young adolescents. This type of learning involves students intellectually and physically in varied learning tasks in contrast to passive learning and oneway communication. The middle grades should reflect thoughtful classrooms with plenty of opportunities for student questioning and talk and student responsibility and accountability for completing their assignments.

Teaching and Learning Styles

Research findings suggest that the difficulty some students have in learning basic skills may be attributed partly to a difference between learning styles and teaching styles (Sechler and Crowe 1986). Those affected include delinquents, poor readers, youth from certain ethnic groups, many youth of the majority population, and school dropouts. Addressing learning styles improves attitudes and reduces discipline problems--two important issues in dealing with students struggling to learn basic skills. Learning styles theory and research have three important implications for basic skills achievement: how we interpret students' failure to learn basic skills, what we do about our students' difficulty in learning basic skills, and how basic skills can be achieved (Sechler and Crowe 1986).

One of the most highly relevant dropout studies (Gadwa and Griggs 1985) on the implications for counselors reports that 17 of 23 variables of a Learning Style Inventory differentiates significantly among three student groups, thus supporting the hypothesis that differences exist in the learning style preferences of dropouts, alternative students, and traditional students. Learning style preferences of the dropout sample reveal that these students were motivated to learn; were strongly peer- and teacher-oriented, but also preferred variety in the learning environment; required mobility and were unable to sit for long periods of time; were easily bored by daily routines and highly structured learning requirements; preferred evening as the optimal time for learning and had difficulty functioning well during the morning hours; and viewed tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory perceptions as strong modalities in the learning process. The same methods that successfully teach one student may fail to reach another.

Apparently, certain basic patterns influence aspects of one's personal behavior. Generally, these are called personality styles. When they affect learning, we refer to them as learning styles; when the patterns are reflected in teaching, we call them teaching styles. Sechler and Crowe (1986) indicate that "style" refers to the gradual development and dynamic nature of an individual's learning behavior and that learning styles are overall pictures of individual learning procedures and preferences. Also, these patterns are rather stable but are capable of adjustment, depending on the learning task and teaching method used. As individuals mature, their learning styles normally tend to deal better with abstractions.

Cornett (1983) suggests that learning styles can be defined as a consistent pattern of behavior--but with a certain range of individual variability, that is, they are "overall patterns" that provide direction for learning behavior. She distinguishes between the cognitive, affective, and physiological aspects: *cognitive*--how the brain receives, processes, stores, retrieves, and applies information; *affective*--how emotional and personality characteristics such as motivation and sociability influence the learning situation; and *physiological*--how the senses, environment, and time of day enhance or impede the learning process.

Sechler and Crowe (1986) suggest that several basic observations can be supported, for example: (1) secondary school teachers appear to implement fewer instructional practices than do elementary teachers; (2) school settings tend to favor students who are analytical, task-oriented, comfortable with abstractions and verbal and who have a long attention span; (3) since the human brain constantly grows and changes, environmental stimulation and a wide range of experiences are needed for optimum brain functioning.

Sechler and Crowe also report that at least two relevant concepts appear to have had a major influence on teaching and learning. The first concept, *individual differences*, traditionally has meant that students display different aptitudes by achieving at different levels. The second concept is *mastery learning*. Research by Bloom and others (cited by Sechler and Crowe 1986) conclude that students differ in their rate of learning rather than in their basic capacity to learn. Bloom's studies reveal that (1) under favorable conditions, up-to-90 percent of the students can learn school subjects up to the same standard that the top 10 percent accomplish under usual conditions and (2) under favorable conditions, most students become similar in learning ability, rate of learning, and motivation for further learning. In other words, learning conditions rather than student capability appear to create individual differences.

Many different theories and descriptions exist. For example, Guild and Garger (1985) provide the following four categories:

- **Cognition: "How Do I Know?"** Some of us perceive best what is real, whereas others clearly see possibilities with their imaginations. Some people see parts of a whole, separating ideas from their context, whereas others see the whole--not unlike the difference between seeing the trees or the forest.

- **Conceptualization: "How Do I Think?"** Some people are most typically convergers, always looking for connections, ways to tie things together. Others are more divergent--one thought, idea, or fact triggers a multitude of new directions. Some people order ideas, information, and experiences in a very linear, sequential way; others organize their thoughts in clusters and random patterns. Some people think aloud. They verbalize ideas as a way of understanding them. Others concentrate on understanding concepts and experiences privately in their own minds. Some people think quickly, spontaneously, and impulsively; others are slower and more reflective.

- **Affect: "How Do I Decide?"** Some people are motivated internally; others seek external rewards. Some people actively seek to please others--children to please their parents and teachers, adults to please bosses and spouses--but some people are not attuned to others' expectations, and still others will rebel against such demands. Some people make decisions logically, rationally, objectively, and with cool heads. Others often decide things subjectively, focusing on perceptions and emotions--their own and others.' Some people seek frequent feedback on their ideas and work, some are crushed by slight criticism, others welcome analytical comments, and still others don't even ask an outside for a critique.

- **behavior: "How Do I Act?"** Some people scan a situation to get the gist before tackling a problem; others focus on a certain part of the problem immediately and start with it. Some people approach a task randomly; others are very systematic. Some people need explicit structure; others prefer and perform best in a more open-ended situation. Some people prefer to work alone, others with groups, and some prefer working in certain physical environments. (pp. 8-9).

One of the dimensions of learning style that has received a great deal of attention is the concept of field-dependent/field-independent. Persons who are influenced to a large extent by factors around them may find it hard to pick out specific information within that frame of reference. The view perceived is like a landscape snapshot that tries to take in everything. These learners are field-dependent. Persons who focus on specific information within the frame of reference are field-independent. Their snapshots do not attempt to take in everything but impose a logical order on what is objectively meaningful. Although few students function totally at either end of the continuum, most display tendencies in one direction or another (Sechler and Crowe 1986). One type is as intelligent as the other; their comparative learning achievement, however, may differ depending on the kind and complexity of the learning task. This is because--if the degree of complexity is equal--a learning task incompatible with one's learning style tends to take longer to do. Exhibits 7 and 8 illustrate the differences in this conceptualization:

EXHIBIT 7

HOW STUDENTS LEARN

Field Dependence	Field Independence
Perceive globally	Perceive analytically
Make broad distinctions among concepts	Make specific concept distinctions
Have a social orientation	Have an impersonal orientation
Learn material with social content best	Learn social material only as an intentional task
Attend best to material relevant to own experience	Interested in new concepts for their own sake
Seek externally defined goals and reinforcements	Have self-defined goals and reinforcements
Want organizations to be provided	Can self-structure situations
More affected by criticism	Less affected by criticism

SOURCE: Guild and Garger 1985, p. 30.

EXHIBIT 8

HOW TEACHERS TEACH

Field Dependence	Field Independence
Strong in establishing a warm and personal learning environment, emphasize personal aspects of instruction	Strong in organizing and guiding student learning, emphasize cognitive aspect
Prefer teaching situations that allow interaction	Prefer impersonal teaching methods such as a lecture
Use questions to check on student learning	Use questions to introduce topics and following student answers
More student-centered	More teacher-centered
Provide less feedback, avoid negative evaluation	Give specific corrective feedback, use negative evaluation

SOURCE: Guild and Garger 1985, p. 31.

Not surprisingly, more than one theorist has sought to distinguish the relationships between different learning and teaching styles. Gregorc (cited in Sechler and Crowe [1986]) does so by focusing on how people perceive information (concrete vs. abstract) and order information (sequential vs. random). He uses the same descriptors for four learning and four teaching styles: *concrete random* (CR)--intuitive; *concrete sequential* (CS)--experimental; *abstract random* (AR)--reflective; and *abstract sequential* (AS)--logical. Gregorc believes that students and teachers have strengths in at least one of these styles. The objective for teachers, then, is to develop skill in several styles in order to better teach students whose learning style does not match the teacher's preferred style. Undoubtedly, one of the first steps in reaching this goal is to attempt to make a personal assessment of one's own style. Exhibit 9 presents a short checklist based on Gregorc's analysis that will help identify which of the four styles we favor.

EXHIBIT 9

CHECKLIST ON TEACHING/LEARNING STYLES

___ CR --Want to probe and examine
--Desire students to think for themselves
--Like the discovery approach
--Offer unexpected resources

___ CS --Favor highly structured activities
--Use practical lessons
--Value physical first-hand experience
--Work under strict time limitations

___ AR --Offer a personalized class
--Foster spontaneity
--Cover material by themes
--Like self-expression
--Use media and discussion as primary teaching tools

___ AS --Use logic and analytical approaches
--Require testing of hypotheses, often through debate
--Stress memory and comprehension of theory
--Rely on lecture format and extensive reading assignments

Merely identifying our styles is not enough. They need to be related to students' learning styles in order to have an impact on the process of learning basic skills. It is estimated that more than 30 learning style assessment instruments exist. Nevertheless, more needs to be known about how matching works. Meanwhile, understanding our favorite teaching style can help us guard against using it exclusively. To help us move ahead in this area, Cornett (1983) has developed a self-administered instrument that you might find useful. We have shortened and adapted it. In order to complete it, place an "X" on the line at the point you think you fall with regard to the polar concepts expressed by the two words.

EXHIBIT 10

INFORMAL LEARNING STYLE INVENTORY

Cognitive Style

focusing	scanning
separating	integrating
parts	whole
discriminate	generalize
sharpening	leveling
abstract	concrete
reflective	impulsive
deductive	inductive
convergent	divergent
analytic	global
logical	metaphoric
words	images
details and facts	generalizations
careful	quick
literal	figurative
outline	summarize
surface approach	deep approach
memorize	associate/understand
verbal communication	nonverbal communication

Affective Style

objective	subjective
practical	theoretical
reality	fantasy
subject-oriented	people-oriented
realistic	imaginative
intellectual	creative
close-minded	open-minded
conformist	individualist
concentration	distraction
reserved	outgoing
thinker	intuiter
rigid	flexible
competitive	cooperative
structured	unstructured
intrinsically motivated	extrinsically motivated
persistent	gives up easily
cautious	risk-taking
intolerant of ambiguity	tolerant of ambiguity
internal locus of control	external locus of control
leader	follower
does not like pressures	likes pressure
likes working alone	likes working in a group

Physical Style

(check your preferences)

Receiving Information		Expressing Yourself	
visual (reading, viewing)	____	visual (writing, drawing)	____
auditory	____	oral	____
kinesthetic (feeling, doing)	____	kinesthetic (feeling, doing)	____

SOURCE: Adapted from Cornett 1983, pp. 16-18.

Cornett also presents several teaching strategies that recognize the existence of different learning styles. The following strategies may be especially useful in teaching basic skills to students with learning difficulties:

- o Ask questions at all levels of the cognitive domain that address several levels of thinking.
- o Help students engage new ideas through past experiences by providing a general overview of material.
- o Clarify the purpose before involving students in any learning experience.
- o Facilitate skill development through spaced practice that incorporates more than one sensory mode.
- o Help students process and retrieve information through multisensory techniques (e.g., both written and verbal directions).
- o Bring closure to learning through a variety of review and reflection strategies.

In order to affect learning styles to make students more flexible, you also might wish to consider the following activities suggested by Sechler and Crowe (1986):

- o Help students understand their style through individual and group discussions.
- o Avoid reducing styles to merely another way of labeling students; always consider contextual factors in a given learning situation.
- o Form a support group with other teachers who are interested in teaching/learning styles.

We must to be alert to the dangers in misusing learning style concepts and avoid turning these ideas into stereotypes that will be used to pigeonhole individuals.

Relevant Career Awareness and Educational Planning Issues

We have many choices in designing dropout prevention strategies, not the least of which is career awareness and exploration. Numerous writers focus on various dimensions of this issue. Bringing work into a closer relationship to education is becoming a central focus in the overall thrust of conserving human resources. The concept includes planned coordination of schools with all of the important community sectors that have the potential for providing significant learning experiences for youth, that is, industry, agriculture, service agencies (both public and private), and youth organizations. In their analysis of state education commissions, Smith and Hester (1985) recommend that career exploration in the middle years of schooling concentrate on students' awareness of their potential as workers. Also, Otte and Sharpe (1979) explore the effects--generally positive--of career exploration on self-esteem, achievement motivation, and occupational knowledge.

The Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (1982) devotes an entire issue of one of their "Ideas for Action" booklets on ways to prepare middle and junior high school students to study the concept of work. A flexible middle school curriculum, they maintain, is one of the primary ways to help youth see the relationships between school and work. The "work-as-a-topic-of-study" concept is divided into three progressive levels that are sequential, although not rigidly so. The three levels are as follows: Level I, infusion of work-as-a-topic-of-study, integrates ongoing daily lessons with brief references to the world of work and careers. Level II, classroom-based experiential learning about work roles, presents classroom activities that teach decision-making and teaming skills in addition to providing ways for teachers to help youth learn from adults and from each other. Level III, community-based learning about work roles, provides activities that teach youth the skills to use local resources to reinforce coursework and, at the same time, serve as a basis for career planning.

What is most useful about this approach is that it organizes activities into a sequence that helps students see the relevance of school and its relationship to their future. The logical extension of this is an additional level, Level IV, that provides students structured experiences in using community resources to gather accurate information for formulating their preliminary career plans. The authors of "Ideas for Action" suggest that this approach provides a smooth transition from middle school to high school as well as from high school to work or higher education. Due to the intellectual and social diversity of 10- to 14-year-olds, they suggest that Level IV is used most appropriately--and selectively--with youth who have developed a positive relationship with an adult mentor, have a special interest they could consider as a potential career possibility, are approaching a decision about enrolling in a high school vocational program, and have difficulty learning in the traditional school environment.

A tremendous amount of materials is available on career education. One of the best summaries of these materials can be found in Bailey's (1985) book. His chapter on a developmental curriculum model for career education is most valuable. Interestingly, Bailey reserves the terms "awareness" for grades K-3 and "exploration and preparation" for grades 9-12. He uses the terms "accommodation" and "orientation" for the grades that relate to us most, 4-6 and 7-8. For example:

- **Accommodation--Grades 4-6**

  -- Developing greater self-knowledge
  -- Developing concepts about the world of work
  -- Displaying increased responsibility for own behavior
  -- Learning how to gather information and make decisions
  -- Showing awareness of the nature of group membership
  -- Accepting differences in work attitudes and values

- **Orientation--Grades 7 and 8**

  -- Clarifying occupational self-concept
  -- Surveying the structure and interrelatedness of the American economic system
  -- Recognizing responsibility for own career planning
  -- Practicing information-seeking and decision-making methods

-- Participating in simulated, group work activities
-- Appreciating the role of work in meeting social and individual needs (p. 98)

Bailey takes each of these broad goal statements for career education stages and presents more specific goals and a detailed rationale for each one.

We cannot begin to speak of career education unless we briefly acknowledge the long-term contribute of Dr. Kenneth Hoyt, formerly the director of the U.S. Office of Career Education. There are no career education issues that Hoyt (1976) has left unexplored over the past 15 or so years. We will only present one brief item that is most relevant to our concerns, namely, the benefits of career awareness for our grade level students:

- **Grade Level 4-6**

  -- Students learn why they should study various subjects by seeing how adults use such subject matter to be successful in their jobs.

  -- Students learn to respect all jobs and appreciate their societal contributions.

  -- Students' self-concept improves--being important through being successful.

  -- Students gain respect for their parents through the respect they gain for the work parents do.

- **Grade Level 7-9**

  -- Students learn, through practical experiences, their strengths and limitations.

  -- Students learn adaptability skills needed in all kinds of work (such as communication skills).

  -- Students learn that career exploration is imperative but that firm occupational decisions at this age are undesirable.

  -- Students, by the time they leave grade 9, should be able to relate their strengths and weaknesses to a broad occupational plan, their occupational plans to their educational plans, and their educational plans to a planned delivery system.

The last point, occupational and educational plans, brings us to our next issue, individualized educational planning. Some of the best material we have seen on this topic was developed at the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (Winefordner 1986). As Winefordner makes clear, the initial need for students to develop educational planning skills occurs at the middle and junior high levels where students are first provided opportunities to make curriculum choices. Schools at this level, he observes, are designed to provide experiences to help students develop an understanding of themselves and their world. Through their experiences both at school and at home, these students develop an increased sense of self-identity. In the transition from young adolescence

to what might be called "full-fledged" adolescence, these young people are beginning to think about and plan for "what they want to do when they grow up."

Winefordner also emphasizes that as students develop plans for high school, it is critical that they--and we too--understand that high school is a period where interests are refined, new ones developed, and abilities tested. During the first year in high school, students have opportunities to assess decisions about the courses they have selected. Each year they need to reassess their experiences and modify their plans to reflect any changes in goals. Through their courses and activities, they have many opportunities to continue their career exploration. The guidance and testing program should continue to provide information to help students with their planning and course selection.

In order to help students reach these goals, Winefordner and his colleagues at the Appalachia Regional Laboratory developed the *Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) Unit*. The unit is designed to assist students in developing an initial plan by analyzing and summarizing their past experiences, identifying interests and abilities, relating these to potential careers, and translating their tentative decisions into meaningful plans. The activities help students learn the process of educational planning, an important skill to last a lifetime. Although the unit was designed for use primarily in the eighth grade, it can be started in the seventh grade, concentrating on career orientation and exploration and then concluded in the eighth grade with educational planning. The unit materials consist of a filmstrip/cassette, "Planning Your Education;" a student workbook, *Selecting Courses for Your Career;* and an instructor's guide. The filmstrip introduces the unit and provides an orientation to the importance of program planning and course selection. The workbook helps students focus their career exploration on developing individualized educational plans. Here, briefly, are some of the questions the educational laboratory suggest can be useful in discussions with our students:

- o What kinds of options are available to you when you graduate from high school?
- o Why is it important to make decisions about high school courses in the eighth grade?
- o What do you need to consider in selecting courses if you don't know what you want to do after you graduate?
- o If your school does not offer a program related to an occupation or career field you are interested in, what should you do when selecting courses?
- o Some occupations or career fields require further education after high school. What should be done for selecting high school courses for these occupations and career fields?

Our curriculum to teach basic skills also must include "employability skills." In fact, the two can hardly be separated. Career awareness and individualized educational planning are as basic to a well-rounded graduate as anything else. The problem, however, is that too many young adolescents are unaware of the "world of work," see few career options, and do not plan beyond next week. And, of course, too many simply dropout.

Roles Cooperative Learning and Peer Tutoring Can Play

Cooperative learning and peer teaching or tutoring are approaches that have been found to work particularly well for low-performing at-risk students. Both same-age and cross-age peer tutoring have worked effectively. One advantage of cross-age tutoring is that low-performing students in higher grades can tutor students in lower grades and benefit from their "teaching." Also, Slavin (1983) finds that a variety of cooperative learning arrangements augments the learning of students placed in heterogeneous groups. We will take a brief look at each technique and will begin with cooperative learning.

Slavin (1983) raises perhaps the most fundamental question by asking How do we want to socialize our children? Many educators have attempted to answer this question by exploring the nature of one of the primary approaches to socialization, namely, developing the skills of cooperation and cooperative learning. Cooperation has been defined as a form of relationship "in which participants in a task gain benefits for themselves when they all act so as to maximize the performance of the common task" (Runkel and Schmuck 1982, p. 750). According to Slavin (1977), the concept may have four quite distinct elements. It can refer to *cooperative behavior*, such as working with or helping others. It can refer to a *cooperative incentive structure* in which a group of two or more individuals are rewarded based on the performance of all group members. The term also refers to *cooperative task structures* in which a group of two or more individuals can or must work together but may or may not receive rewards based on their group's performance. It also can refer to *cooperative motives*, the predisposition to act cooperatively or altruistically in a situation that allows individuals a choice between cooperative, competitive, or individualistic behavior.

Cooperative learning and cooperative learning methods are techniques that use *cooperative task structures* in which students spend much of their class time working in four- to six-member heterogeneous groups and *cooperative incentive structures* in which students earn recognition, rewards, or, occasionally, grades based on the academic performance of their group (Slavin 1983). Generally, the programs are not overly prescriptive in that they can be--and have been--implemented at every classroom level and teachers can preserve many aspects of their preferred teaching style. Slavin estimates that well over 20,000 teachers are using various forms of cooperative learning.

The following is a brief overview of what we know about cooperative learning by briefly reviewing the key research in this area. Several educators (e.g., Slavin 1983; Johnson et al. 1981) assert that the research has demonstrated enough positive effects of cooperative learning on a variety of outcomes to force educators to reexamine traditional instructional practices. The research indicates that cooperation has proven potential for improving performance, mutual attraction, and self-esteem. The range of reported positive outcomes is wide. For example, Slavin (1983) observes that regardless of the particular measure involved, about two-thirds of the studies find a significantly positive effect. In his earlier review of 28 research studies, Slavin (1980) presents a number of widely diverse conclusions, including the following:

- Cooperative learning techniques produce poorer academic achievement in only 1 of the 28 projects; in most, cooperation produces significantly superior learning.

- Cooperative learning techniques do better for low-level learning (such as rote knowledge) when the techniques are well structured and use a clear reward system.

- Cooperative learning techniques do better for high-level learning (such as analyzing problems and making judgments) when the techniques use "high student autonomy and participation in decision making."

- Cooperative learning techniques show strong favorable effects on racial relations.

- Cooperative learning techniques show fairly consistent favorable effects on friendship and liking among students.

- In some studies, cooperative learning techniques appear to increase students' self-esteem.

- Students in classes using cooperative learning generally report liking school better than do students in traditionally taught classes.

Johnson et al. (1981) also conducted a meta-analysis of 122 studies comparing the effectiveness of cooperation, cooperation with intergroup competition, interpersonal competition, and individual (independent) work. They conclude that the use of cooperation instead of competition can make a great difference in academic achievement. They also find some evidence, however, that cooperation was less effective with tasks of simple rote decoding and correcting. The benefits of cooperation show most strongly with tasks of concept attainment, verbal problem solving, categorization, spatial problem solving, retention and memory, motor learning and guessing, judging, or predicting.

Stallings and Stipek (1986) observe that although "packaged" programs are available, teachers can implement cooperative learning principles by using their own instructional materials. They outline the following four major purposes of cooperative learning: (1) cooperative learning is presumed to raise the perceived value of academic achievement among students and to encourage them to support peers rather than compete against them; (2) cooperative learning rests on the belief that youth can learn from each other and that cooperation can benefit both high- and low-ability students; (3) from a motivational perspective, cooperative models are an alternative to the individual competitive model--characteristic of most classrooms--that can have devastating consequences for the motivation of slower learners; and (4) cooperative learning programs were developed in part to improve race relations in the schools. The assumption is that if children from different ethnic groups work interdependently, they will learn to appreciate each other's strengths and develop interracial friendships.

Ray Smith, an English teacher in a junior high school in Massachusetts recently wrote a stimulating article on "a teacher's view of cooperative learning" (Smith 1987). In it, he submits that teaching cooperative learning skills pays off in increased achievement and better attitudes. He credits the approach for changing his entire outlook on teaching. In his words,

> I have been teaching junior high school English for 22 years. A decade ago, I attended a workshop on cooperative learning. . . . That workshop changed my entire approach to teaching; I think it even kept me from leaving the profession. I am a strong advocate of cooperative learning for several reasons. First, it places the responsibility for learning where it belongs: on the students. Second, it increases achievement and improves students' attitudes toward school, toward learning, and toward classmates. Third, it makes both teaching and learning more fun. (p. 663)

Smith presents these five steps for teaching cooperation: help students become aware of the need for each skill, help students gain a clear understanding of each skill, give students situations in which they can practice social skills, give each student feedback on his or her performance of the skill, and persevere in practicing the skill. His conclusions are simple and direct:

> When I describe cooperative learning to other teachers, they often respond, 'I already do that.' But there is a big difference between group work by students who have not been taught how to cooperate and group work by students who have learned how to contribute their own ideas, encourage others to participate, express support for others, summarize, and coordinate the efforts of all members of the group. Students who have not been taught cooperative skills are often unproductive in groups, and their interactions are sometimes unpleasant. One common complaint is that a few students do all the work. By contrast, students who have learned cooperative skills have little trouble staying on task. They enjoy their time together, care about other members of the group, and turn out high-quality products. (p. 664)

Smith, a practicing teacher, feels that the requisite skills for cooperative learning can be taught at all levels and in all content areas. Although it takes time early in the school year, the payoffs come later in better attitudes and increased achievement.

Incidentally, Slavin and his colleagues at The Johns Hopkins University have developed several programs and many excellent materials for teachers. Team Assisted Instruction (TAI), for example, is a comprehensive approach to mathematics instruction that includes a method of team study in which students work through curriculum units with feedback provided by partners. The greatest application apparently has been in grades three through six and in seventh- and eighth-grade classes that are not ready for algebra. Also, a related program, TAI MATH is a systematic curriculum for grades three to six that combines interactive instruction with cooperative learning. In this case, TAI means "team accelerated instruction." The TAI MATH cooperative learning approach encourages students to help each other, frees teachers to provide direct instruction to small groups and individuals, and allows students to develop more responsibility for their own learning.

Another valuable set of their instructional techniques is the Student Team Learning products. These materials are intended to (1) increase basic skills learning in many areas by making practice interesting and by making students want each other to do their best, (2) develop positive interstudent relations in desegregated classrooms or other heterogeneous groups by having students share a common goal and help one another learn, and (3) improve self-esteem and feelings of competence by encouraging students to value one another and see one another as important resources.

Programs in which the skills of cooperation and cooperative learning are developed can teach young adolescents something they rarely experience in traditional classrooms, namely, that learning can come from shared ideas and shared work to reach a common goal. From such team efforts, mutual respect for individual contributions has a chance to develop. These types of collegial skills are well recognized as requisites to a successful adult work life. Cooperation and cooperative learning skills in adult workers are essential ingredients of a productive workforce. Clearly, a wider door must be opened for teaching them to the workers of tomorrow. At present, however, we seemingly have not played a major role in developing either set of skills to the fullest extent.

Before cooperation and cooperative learning skills can be taught effectively, however, an important first step must be taken, that is, the preparation of teachers. Before we can use the available resources, before we try various approaches in different subject areas, and before we develop a variation that works best for us and our students, we must have three essential ingredients: commitment, clear role perceptions, and--perhaps most important--knowledge of and training in teaching these critical skills.

As far as peer tutoring is concerned, as Willis (1986) points out, both same-age and cross-age peer tutoring work effectively. Actually, there are many types of tutors. They could be a professional teacher, an adult aide, a parent, a retired teacher, a community volunteer, or a peer.

Research, as noted, indicates that repeated academic failure is a major factor in a student's decision to drop out. Tutoring either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups sometimes can spell the difference between success and failure. However, tutoring must be matched as much as possible with student needs. It also is important that tutors--whoever they are--must be trained to teach at the appropriate reading and/or math levels, set short-term goals, and give praise for achievement and effort.

The Florida Department of Education (1986) suggests the following tutoring approaches:

- **Career mentors**--Students who are doing poorly in a subject are matched with a tutor who specializes in that area, for example, someone having trouble with math hopefully can be tutored by an engineer or computer scientist. In this way, the student sees that math skills are essential on the job.

- **Computer tutors**--Students use computer terminals to work on remediation of basic skills and other academic subjects. Success here may not only help them improve their skills but also may regenerate an interest in school.

- **Parents as tutors**--Parents of potential dropouts are taught skills which enable them to tutor their children successfully. Studies indicate that parental help may be one of the most effective means of improving achievement.

- **Peer tutors**--Students, including potential dropouts, are trained to serve as tutors. This approach can produce significant achievement gains for tutors as well as for the recipients.

- **Senior mentors**--Older individuals with expertise in certain areas volunteer to help students complete school projects or improve academic skills. These volunteers can benefit by feeling needed as they continue to use their skills. In addition, young adolescents gain respect for older persons, plus they learn how skills taught in school apply to the world.

Because of its relevance to cooperation and cooperative learning, we would like to "zero in" on peer tutoring and share several practical suggestions. Not long ago, several researchers at the National Center for Research in Vocational Education published a highly useful resource on this topic (Ashley et al. 1986). Literally, they provide "everything you always wanted to know" about peer tutoring--and then some! For example, the monograph includes very detailed guidelines on program planning, development, and evaluation; 13 peer tutoring program descriptions at all levels including postsecondary; numerous resources, sample materials, and a highly instructive section on "tips for tutors."

Ashley and his colleagues define peer tutoring as an instructional approach that has been used successfully with both youth and adults to achieve academic and social development goals. Collaborative learning, they note, as practiced in peer tutoring can be beneficial for disabled and nondisabled persons. Benefits that accrue to the "tutee" include increased individualized attention, closeness to the instructor, and improved learning efficiency. Positive gains have been shown in academic achievement, social integration, and cognitive skill development--with various configurations of tutoring, including peer, cross-age, adult-child, and normal-handicapped, as well as handicapped learners serving as tutors for nonhandicapped learners.

In terms of program planning, the following tasks are involved in preparing a successful peer tutoring program: establishing a planning group, assessing student needs, developing program goals, determining facility and material equipment needs, determining personnel requirements, drafting a plan, and presenting the plan to the administration for review. Ashley and his colleagues report details on each of these essential planning elements.

As far as program development is concerned, following approval of the program plans, the next phase focuses on developing and implementing the major program components. The necessary steps here are to develop an orientation program for students, faculty, and staff; an inservice training component for faculty and staff; tutor recruitment and selection procedures; a training program for potential peer tutors; procedures for student intake and referral; guidelines for matching and assigning tutor-tutee pairs; and coordination of routine tasks. Again, detailed suggestions and guidelines are presented. We will focus on only one of these concerns that seemingly is of greatest concern to most of us, namely, the issue of matching and assignment.

With regard to matching and assignment, student selection procedures are planned and implemented to help identify students who best meet program criteria for becoming tutors and tutees. After participants have been identified, guidelines must be developed for matching tutors and tutees. A number of points need to be considered in matching. Compatibility is a major factor. One of the most important considerations is selecting students who can work well together. This involves more than social compatibility. Other characteristics to consider include tutor competency in the subject area, the tutee's preference, cultural differences that may impede tutoring, and different learning styles. Ashley and his colleagues suggest that in some cases it may be

a good idea to use tutors who are slightly older than tutees since some students may resent help from a same-age peer.

Also, it often is beneficial for a tutor and tutee to become acquainted during an informal meeting if they do not know each other. It may be necessary to introduce several tutors to one tutee before a final match is made. Observation of the interaction by the coordinator or teacher will assist in ensuring a compatible match. Tutors and tutees should be informed, at this point, about their right to end the match at any time if the relationship is unproductive.

After the tutor and tutee have been matched, the time and place of tutoring can be scheduled. In larger schools, it may be necessary to coordinate with the administrator in charge of room scheduling when assigning tutoring sites in order to avoid scheduling conflicts with other activities. Arranging for tutoring sessions to be held at the same prearranged location and selecting sites near the subject-area classroom ensures that staff can assist with questions or problems that may arise during the session and that resource material will be readily available.

If tutoring is conducted in a central location, typical planning considerations include the following: identifying mutually agreeable free time for the tutor and tutee; assigning space and time within the tutoring area; providing a monitor for the scheduled time; communicating the schedule to tutor, tutee, and monitor; and securing parental permission (for both tutor and tutee) if this is required by school policy. A number of other tasks also are important, for example, monitoring tutoring sessions, supervising tutors, and assessing the program. However, no doubt one of the most important is communicating with parents. At the middle and junior high school level, policy may require parental approval for tutoring or being tutored and, additionally, for the release of any information from a student's personal record file (e.g., test scores and grades). The coordinator always should maintain communication with parents regarding students' progress or any problems.

Vocational Education: Content and Process

Although we are focusing on middle and junior high schools, we should not overlook the role vocational education plays in dropout prevention. We would profit from a close look at the lessons we might learn from voc ed content and process. This is so particularly in light of Weber's (1987) finding that the basic skill levels of potential and actual dropouts often increase substantially when they participate in a vocationally-oriented program that has an integrated basic skills component.

Hamilton (1986) states that voc ed--in a real sense--is a "huge dropout prevention program" and that the nearly universal presence of voc ed components in successful dropout prevention programs strongly supports the claim that without it many more students would dropout. He also makes it clear that the real-life, practical quality of voc ed is more comfortable and more effective for marginal students than is abstract academic education. Voc ed can serve as a vehicle for teaching academic skills and general--rather than specific--occupational competencies. He also believes that the assumption in some of the recent "reform movement" positions that the academic classroom is always the best place for learning is simply unsupported by research.

Goodlad (1983a) reports that in voc ed one finds more instructional demonstrations and production of products. He also finds that voc ed students are considerably more involved in setting their own goals. Although Goodlad feels that these classes were not markedly divergent from most academic courses, they did not have the evident "sameness" of instruction found in academic subjects. Some middle school personnel believe that voc-tech programs should be introduced prior to high school--in middle and upper elementary schools.

Some studies have begun to explore the relationship of voc ed and non-voc ed experiences and the decision to dropout (Weber 1987). Also, analysis by Mertens, Seitz, and Cox (1982) on data obtained in interviews with the New Youth Cohort of the National Longitudinal Surveys of Labor Force Behavior confirms that--all else being equal--the more vocational classes students took, the less likely they were to drop out. Research evidence also suggests that the dropout problem can be alleviated through targeted programs that includes voc ed (Weber and Mertens 1987). In studies summarized by Weber and his colleagues, voc ed components are critical to youth who actually have left school and entered Job Corps or Job Training Partnership Act programs.

Research findings suggest that when voc ed is coupled with other critical components of a dropout prevention program, the program can be effective. Lotto (1982), for example, concludes that voc ed and work experience are powerful components of a dropout prevention strategy but that they cannot function alone. In her study, voc ed components are defined as instruction in occupational and employment skills; work experience components are defined as actual, on-the-job work experience. Lotto draws three major generalizations with regard to characteristics held in common across the programs she studied. The first, which is strongly supported in her research, is that effective dropout prevention programs employ multiple strategies integrated within a single program, that is, not a single program used voc ed and/or work experience alone to retain probable dropouts in school. The second generalization, which also is strongly supported, is that effective dropout prevention programs concentrate their resources on a relatively small target population. The third generalization, which is moderately supported by her research, is that effective dropout prevention programs place youth in contexts that are dissimilar to traditional school environments, that is, in environments that provide a more supportive, personal, and individualized context for learning than those that youth perceive or receive in their regular schools. These new environments include schools-within-schools, alternative schools, or centers providing a learning setting that is personal, informal, and caring.

The voc ed linkage also is clear in Weber's (1987) study. The results of this study suggest that programs featuring three types of activities play an important role in dropout prevention. When properly structured, programs that identify dropout-prone students, provide guidance and counseling, and provide opportunities to learn occupational skills that define specific careers appear to be beneficial in reducing the dropout rate. Recognizing that although no magic formulas exist, Weber recommends the following:

- Potential dropouts need to participate in vocational programs in a meaningful way for voc ed to have a positive impact on the dropout rate. Schools with high dropout rates do not emphasize voc ed as a curriculum alternative any more than do schools with low rates. This suggests that if the positive, retention-

related benefits from participating in voc ed are to be realized, specific steps need to be taken to increase participation of dropout-prone students in those programs.

- o The existing rules governing entry into voc ed should be carefully evaluated on an individual student basis, particularly to students who are dropout-prone. This review needs to be undertaken in order to ensure that students are not being kept out of such programs while being allowed to participate in work-study programs that have few, if any, operational ties with the students' overall school goals.

- o Work-study experiences--particularly those pursued early in students' high school careers--should be evaluated carefully. Such experiences, when not operationally tied to students' overall programs, are not a panacea for resolving an individual student's school problems. (p. xi)

Weber also provides a number of useful insights into strengthening voc ed's role in prevention programs. For example, he notes that research findings suggest that once dropout-prone students are in high school, they tend not to enter the mainstream of vocational programs. Their involvement in these programs appears to be concentrated in exploratory courses, especially consumer/homemaker and industrial arts. These students take relatively few occupational courses that provide specific job training. Moreover, they do not appear to explore the full range of vocational offerings or develop a vocational specialty. Weber also observes that because too few dropout-prone students appear to follow the normal transitional paths through their schools' vocational programs or take advantage of the job training aspects of those programs, mechanisms for assisting them in these matters need to be implemented. He suggests that these mechanisms, among others, might include the following:

- o Offering occupational courses earlier in the students' careers and not requiring a variety of "exploratory" prerequisites.

- o Offering exploratory courses as well as any required remedial courses at an earlier time (e.g., eighth grade) or as special courses (e.g., after school or summer) in order to ensure that time during the high school day is devoted to occupational courses.

In response to the question of what vocational offerings are more clearly related to reducing dropout rates, Weber (1987) suggests that successful dropout prevention programs possess the following characteristics--among others:

- o Programs are holistic and multifaceted. The most prevalent strategies include a combination of parent involvement, remedial basic skills instruction, and work experience/job placement with counseling, support services, and in-school vocational instruction all coming in as close seconds.

- o Programs are presented in contexts that differ from the traditional environment even though they may be housed in the same physical plant--for example, involve special motivational strategies such as tying school activities directly to the real world, design activities to build *esprit de corps* among students, and involve some degree of individualized learning activities.

- Programs are focused on dropout-prone students who are in the beginning stages of their high school careers (between the ages of 14 and 16), prior to the time when they would normally become formally involved in a voc ed program. (p. 17)

Last, Weber sums up the program characteristics commonly noted by voc ed proponents in exhibit 11.

EXHIBIT 11

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS COMMONLY NOTED BY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROPONENTS

Vocational Programs	vs.	Other Curricular Offerings
Active role in learning		Passive learner role
Concrete, hands-on experiences		Abstract, generalized learning
Experiences relevant to learner's everyday life "outside the school"		Experiences not directly relevant to learner's life outside the school
Learning proceeds from concrete to abstract		Learning proceeds from abstract to abstract, principle to principle
Learning occurs within an "application" context		Learning is context free
Preparation for labor market entry; does not necessarily limit learner 's postsecondary options		Preparation for additional schooling or a "general" education not directed toward either a job or further education

SOURCE: Adapted from Weber 1987, p. 18.

Weber stresses the need for a competency-based curriculum rather than a "conveyor belt" one. Fortunately, a number of vocational and other educators have spent many years sharpening their insights with regard to developing such programs. One of the leaders in the field, Robert Norton of the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, is particularly at the cutting edge. Norton (1982) summarizes what he considers to be the five essential elements of such programs:

- Competencies to be achieved by the students have been--
  - -- carefully identified,
  - -- verified by local experts, and
  - -- made public.

- Criteria for assessing each of the verified competencies have been--

  -- derived from analysis of the competencies,
  -- explicitly stated along with conditions, and
  -- made public.

- Instructional program provides for the--

  -- individual development of each competency and
  -- individual assessment of each competency.

- Assessment of the students' competency--

  -- takes knowledge into account,
  -- takes attitudes into account, and
  -- requires actual performance of the competency as the major source of evidence.

- Students progress through the program--

  -- at their own rate and
  -- by demonstrating their competence.

Vocational education methods and techniques are highly consistent with many of the recommendations we have seen regarding dropout prevention strategies, particularly those calling for highly individualized and alternative instructional approaches. Maley (1978) performs a great service in presenting a number of the most relevant ones. We have summarized briefly those that appear to be most applicable to middle and junior high school instruction.

- **The contract method** is an agreed upon arrangement between the teacher (or school authority) and the students with respect to the proposed accomplishments of the students and the reward system set up for such accomplishments. The contract system may be operated on a single student-teacher agreement, a group of students, or on a total class basis. (p. 170)

- **The demonstration method** as a form of instructional methodology involves the actual carrying out of a process or series of actions in a manner that the learner may be able to understand the principle being taught. It normally involves action, procedure, technique, and information, coupled with communication that goes beyond the verbal explanation . . . the demonstration usually involves an interface with a number of different methods of teaching. The demonstration has few limitations in content and is applicable in all areas of learning. (p. 86)

- **The discovery method** implies that a learner derives understandings of various phenomena by direct personal involvement in a sequence of events--including observation or detection and awareness of dimensions, plus some form of internalizing, formulating, and concluding. The discovery is the result of an individual or group involvement that permits the discovered element or phenomena to surface. This method utilizes different degrees of planning--from a formal,

directed experience with a precise procedure and an identified expected outcome--to a more informal, unstructured experience with unpredictable procedures. (p. 220)

- **The problem solving method** makes use of one or more acceptable approaches to solving the problems that are developed by the students or are generated out of the activities of the learning situation, that is, it places considerable emphasis on student involvement in the processes of arriving at answers to problems faced by the students. (p. 212)

- **The project method** (often) makes use of a constructional vehicle. Its purpose is to carry, implement, and develop the content and processes associated with a course as well as contribute to the development of the individuals. All of this is in keeping with the goals of the experience. Skills, understandings and processes are developed and applied in a measure through involvement in the project. (p. 108)

In the high school grades, cooperative education also is a highly successful instructional approach. Indeed, it is a powerful strategy that bridges school and work. Such programs provide a dynamic laboratory for students to apply and refine skills learned in their job-simulation laboratories. Cooperative programs also provide opportunities for students to assume responsibilities and monetary rewards through a satisfactory job placement. As an instructional method, it is the "payoff" for voc ed, that is, job placement and success are greatly enhanced (Nystrom, Bayne, and McClellan 1977).

We are not suggesting that we turn middle and junior high schools into voc-tech schools; our point is that we can learn much from voc ed curriculum content and instructional processes.

Industrial Arts and Technology Education

Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and a former United States commissioner of education, says that he finds "scandalous" the "mindless distinctions" being drawn between the so-called academic and nonacademic programs. In his words,

> I believe that the false barriers between the so-called academic and vocational should be broken down. The truth is academic programs are, in fact, preparing students for a vocation. And the other truth is that vocational education also introduces students to great literature, to basic scientific principles, and to enduring values, if they are taught with the power and insight that they deserve. (Boyer 1985, p. 6)

Turning his thoughts to technology education, Boyer concludes:

> If we can find a way to relate technology to the larger values, then I believe this nation will not only survive, but, for coming generations, will flourish with dignity as well. (p. 6)

Technology education, he asserts, is a force to be reckoned with.

What is technology education and why, as middle and junior high school teachers, should we listen with special care when we hear the term? We all are aware that industrial arts education has undergone a tremendous transition into a new thrust that has been called technology education. Let's look at this key definition:

> *Technology education* is a comprehensive, action-based educational program concerned with technical means, their evolution, utilization, and significance; with industry, its organization, personnel, systems, techniques, resources and products; and their social/cultural impact. (International Technology Education Association 1985, p. 25)

What are the purposes of tech ed? Many new tech ed programs are exploring the history of technology as well as recent developments in computers, space technology, robotics, satellite communication, and laser printing. Students in these programs are learning about tools, materials, and processes while gaining an appreciation for technology's significant social and cultural aspects. These programs are based on the assumption that because technology affects everyone, tomorrow's citizens should understand technology and know how to control it for everyone's betterment.

What are some of technology education's specific goals? In the middle schools, the primary goal is to provide students with an orientation and exploration of technology. Because our culture is increasingly characterized as technological, our role is to give every student an insight and understanding of the technological nature of our society. Exemplary middle-level tech ed programs strive to do that by acquainting students with their technological environment so they can make rational decisions about their own lives and join in controlling their destiny.

What exactly is behind the change from industrial arts to tech ed? Sensing a gap between the changing nature of technology compared to traditional industrial arts, 23 leaders in the industrial arts profession met at Jackson's Mill, West Virginia. The resulting report (Snyder and Hales n.d.) called for a radical departure from the traditional industrial arts. This set in motion a chain reaction that prompted several states to revise their programs completely and others to begin the process. In essence, the Jackson's Mill theorists perceived the domains of knowledge (sciences, technologies, humanities) to interact with the adaptive systems (ideological, sociological, technological). That is, as people discover more knowledge, the easier it is for them to adapt. Conversely, as they develop better ways to adapt, they themselves contribute to the domains of knowledge.

What are the benefits of tech ed? The projected benefits are that students know and appreciate the importance of technology; apply tools, materials, processes, and technical concepts safely and efficiently; uncover and develop individual talents; apply problem-solving techniques, other school subjects, and apply creative abilities; and deal with the real forces that influence the future.

What are some of the more common elements of these programs? A number of elements can readily be identified. For example, these programs should be an activity program; be taught to all students; orient young adolescents to the challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities of the technological age; include a variety of technological concepts; bridge "academic skills" and "practice," "theory," and "operation;" and

provide an opportunity for young adolescents to determine their own aptitudes and interests.

What is the proper "criteria" for such programs? A number of specific criteria have been established. For example, the program and course content are based on the following points:

- o An organized set of technological concepts, processes, and systems
- o Knowledge about the development of technology and its effect on people, the environment, and culture
- o Content drawn from one or more of the following--
  - -- **communication**--efficiently using resources to transfer information to extend human potential
  - -- **construction**--efficiently using resources to build structures or constructed works on a site
  - -- **manufacturing**--efficiently using resources to extract and convert raw/recycled materials into industrial and consumer goods
  - -- **transportation**--efficiently using resources to attain and maintain physical contact and exchange among individuals and societal units through the movement of materials/goods and people
- o Assisting students in developing insight, understanding, and application of technological concepts, processes, and systems
- o Applying tools, materials, machines, processes, and technical concepts safely and efficiently
- o Developing skills, creative abilities, positive self-concepts, and individual potentials in technology
- o Developing problem-solving and decision-making abilities involving human and material resources, processes, and systems
- o Preparing students for lifelong learning in a technological society

What curriculum structure is being proposed? The structure--as well as the specific middle and junior high focus--can be summed up graphically in figure 3.

What should the middle or junior high school tech ed program look like? Programs at the middle and junior high school levels are exploratory. Students investigate four broad areas: communication, construction, manufacturing, and transportation. All students should take tech ed at our level, regardless of their career goals. Tech ed courses at our level should be designed to lead into a well-articulated series of courses at the senior high school level and beyond. Problem solving, career orientation, and learning for tomorrow's adaptive environment are cornerstones of the program. One primary goal at our level, therefore, is to assist students in making informed and meaningful educational and occupational choices.

Grades 9-12	High School: Preparation in Technology
Grades 6-9	Middle and Junior High School: Orientation and Exploration
Grades K-6	Elementary School: Learning Reinforcement and Technology Awareness

Figure 3. Technology education curriculum structure

SOURCE: International Technology Education Association 1985, p. 25.

At our level, every student should be required to take a one-semester course in Introduction to Technological Systems. In this course, the four technology areas are broadly presented. After each student takes Introduction to Technological Systems, he or she can elect to take any or all of the four individual courses that should be available (e.g., Communications Systems, Construction Systems, Manufacturing Systems, and Transportation Systems). These courses provide a more in-depth orientation to technological areas from a systems perspective.

Another aspect of technology education that should not be ignored is our need to reexamine and harness career education concepts for the benefit of the emerging technical program concepts. Tech ed should encompass the total program, K-12. This total program should be sequential so that students gain the maximum benefit. Students who go through an articulated program should be prepared for any one of three possible career goals. That is, they may wish to enter college as an engineering, scientific, or technical baccalaureate degree major. Another path is for students to pursue a vocational career after graduating from high school. This also may be done in high school if appropriate vocational courses are offered. Finally, students may take tech ed for general education purposes to make them better prepared to live in a technological world.

Two exciting tech ed instructional approaches also have been explored. Maley (1984) for example, addresses 34 questions that relate to using the approach with regard to introducing the unit, student research, construction activities, the seminar, and evaluation. The second approach, also described by Maley (1986), outlines the research and experimental aspects of tech ed instruction. Among many other suggestions, Maley outlines a number of research procedures. For example, he presents the following "common model procedure" that has been used at both the eighth and ninth grades and senior high school levels: title of research project, statement of problem, statement of purpose, statement of need, background study, statement of limitations, statement of hypothesis(es), statement of assumptions, statement of procedures, listing

of terminology, collection of data, presentation of findings, statement of conclusions, and recommendations.

A number of exciting program examples can be found that describe approaches that have been used successfully at the middle and junior high school. In *Technology Education: A Perspective on Implementation* (International Technology Education Association 1985), for example, detailed descriptions are presented of several programs. We cannot begin to present all the details, but rather give only one brief overview and suggest that you check out the details in the resource noted.

In Syosset Junior High School in Syosset, New York, seventh graders are required to take a 10-week course in communication technology. Students circulate through six activity stations: amateur radio, offset lithography, videotape/television, technical drawing, computer communications, and photography. The purpose is to create an understanding of the pervasive role communications technology plays in advanced societies and to provide students with an ability to communicate ideas, process information through the use of technical means, and explore communications related career opportunities. The course also provides an opportunity for interdisciplinary experiences. Other communications class activities include an oral history project with the English classes. Taped interviews are conducted with senior citizens, transcribed, and keyed into a word processor. Photographs of the senior citizens, along with their stories and recollections, are printed on placemats that are then distributed to local restaurants so visitors can learn about the community. The students do many other tasks in other aspects of the curriculum (e.g., manufacturing technology systems in the eighth grade). That 10-week course is required of all eighth-grade students. Films, lectures, and hands-on activities are used to contrast primitive production methods with contemporary ones. Both programs offer actual experiences in mass producing products using hand tools, machines, and materials. The program attempts to teach how manufacturing influences the cultural context; how to use materials, tools, and machines safely; and how to explore career opportunities.

This program provides young adolescents with exciting learning experiences. The New York State Education Department has developed several new approaches that carry a great deal of promise for stimulating both the curriculum and instructional program for young adolescents, especially for grades 7 and 8. Kadamus and Daggett (1986) describe the program in detail. Once students acquire the necessary foundations in the elementary school, they are to be provided opportunities for developing life skills, career awareness, and job readiness skills through a 3/4-unit requirement in Home and Career Skills that all students must take by the end of the eighth grade. The course is designed to prepare students to meet their present and future responsibilities as a member of a family, consumer, home manager, and wage earner. Since youth begin to assume these responsibilities at the start of adolescence, the program is offered rather early in the school experience. Using hands-on or applied learning experiences, students develop decision-making, management, and personal skills leading to competence in such areas as family resource management, personal development, and career planning.

The second course, Introduction to Technology, enables students to understand the concepts that underlie technological systems. Students learn about the influence that these systems have on their lives, at home, school, and work. The systems studies are biotechnology (agriculture, medicine, food processing and preservation), information/communication technology (information processing, photography, graphic and electronic

communications), and physical technology (construction, energy, manufacturing, transportation). A major emphasis is on providing students with opportunities to apply their new technology understandings to the design, development, maintenance, and operation of systems in each of the three categories.

The curriculum, developed in a modular format, is organized in two parts. The modules in part one are "Getting to Know Technology," "What Resources Are Needed for Technology," "How People Use Technology to Solve Problems," "What Must Be Known about Systems and Subsystems," and "How Technology Affects People and the Environment." Through a study of such resources as materials, tools and machines, information, capital, human labor, time, and energy and an exploration of how these resources are combined in technological systems, students are provided with conceptual tools that can be useful in solving technological problems. Examples of tasks that students undertake are the construction of a wind chime that illustrates the sound produced by certain materials; the manufacture of glass from raw materials; the enhancement of plant growth by changing the levels of light, moisture, and nutrients in a functioning greenhouse; and the design of a device that will make a task easier for persons with physical handicaps.

Part two addresses additional technological concepts, focusing on technical processes, methods people use to control them, career opportunities, and other personal and societal implications. Students encounter a wide variety of processes such as energy conversion, materials conversion, and information processing; monitor these processes; and use feedback to control the operations of systems. The module titles are "Introduction and Review," "Choosing the Right Resources," "How Resources Are Processed by Technological Systems," "Controlling Technological Systems," "Using Systems to Solve Problems," and "Technology and You: Personal Impacts, Decisions, and Choices." Examples of technical processes students might learn about include converting mechanical energy to electrical energy, forming plastic through vacuum forming, and using computers to produce graphics and to communicate data over telephone lines.

The Introduction to Technology curriculum includes "Technology Learning Activities"--suggested instructional activities teachers use to meet specific performance objectives. These activities emphasize hands-on learning. Whenever applicable, the use of computers is encouraged and supported. In addition, the following skills and concepts have been identified as important to address in each module where appropriate: applied mathematics concepts, applied science concepts, awareness of human elements and societal impacts of technology, communication skills, safety, psychomotor skills, and career-related information.

Recently we received some very interesting materials in the mail from Elementary Industrial Technology Center in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The program being developed--intended for grades four to eight--is entitled "Automotive Creative Technology." The program's motivating activities are to be designed to be readily integrated in interdisciplinary instruction (grades four-six) as a technique to reinforce academic disciplines while providing threshold experiences in industrial science technology. For grades seven and eight, activities are to be formulated to meet the curriculum objectives of specific subjects. Other aspects of this innovative approach include suggested activities in these areas: car models and factory production, global perception, science technology, engines, electronics, car care, safe and enjoyable driving, and career awareness.

In summary, technology education should be added to our list of choices, particularly when those choices include programs as stimulating as these. Tech ed content and process surely can help us bond students more closely to their classes and schools. (For anyone interested in obtaining more information on this topic, write to the International Technology Education Association, 1914 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.)

Discussion Items

1. What local curriculum concerns seem to be most relevant to your situation--regarding dropout prevention? What instructional issues seem to be most relevant?
2. What can you do to make your curriculum more relevant to the needs of dropout-prone students? What specific strategies might you consider?
3. Have we raised our local educational standards--and have we assessed the potential effects?
4. What experiential learning activities seem to be most appropriate at your middle and junior high levels?
5. How do your individual teaching/learning styles promote students' decision to stay in school? inhibit it?
6. How do you "rank" yourselves in terms of the checklist on teaching/learning styles? (See exhibit 9.)
7. How would you respond in terms of the informal learning styles inventory? (See exhibit 10.)
8. What are you doing to promote career awareness and exploration--or to use Bailey's concepts, career accommodation and career orientation?
9. Are you attempting to develop personalized, individualized "educational development plans?"
10. Have you considered any of the various cooperative learning approaches or used any cooperative learning materials?
11. Have you attempted peer tutoring for those who need extra help in the "basics?" Which tutoring approaches are most appropriate to your needs?
12. What vocational education content and which vocational education processes are most relevant to students at your grade levels? Which of the various methods presented are most appropriate to your teaching styles?
13. To what extent are your curricula "competency based?"
14. How can you utilize the cooperative education instructional approach at our grade levels?
15. What is the role of industrial arts and technology education in your school? What might it be?
16. How does the technology education curriculum lend itself to your local situation?

HOW CAN WE ENSURE YOUTH ADVOCACY?

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HOW CAN WE ENSURE YOUTH ADVOCACY?

What Is Advocacy?

To some practitioners, advocacy connotes a nurturing environment and an empathetic regard for students rather than sentimentality and softness. To others, advocacy means teachers and counselors who are realistic, sympathetic, and who can relate to the student's background and culture; it also means more personal attention for individual students, more individualization, more commitment. Advocacy means teachers who are upbeat with and unafraid of students who may at times tend to "baffle and offend" the rest of the general population.

To others, advocacy means "a community of believers"--teachers, counselors, principals, custodians, psychologists, social workers, secretaries, mentors, volunteers. Advocacy also means respect for students as individuals, for their right to participate in decisions affecting their own lives, for opportunities to expand their independence and take on new responsibilities, and for the right to engage with adults in serious examination of values and to formulate their own value system. Sometimes advocacy is translated into programs such as "IALAC," an acronym for "I am lovable and capable."

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (1986) asserts that advocacy implies "student empowerment" which results from the students' sense of ownership of their dropout prevention program. Students achieve self-direction and accountability for their lives through student-centered programs delivered by dedicated staff advocates. The advocates, teachers and counselors, would see that all students succeed; enabling students to plan; helping students to fulfill their potential; helping students learn to set and achieve attainable goals; allowing students to own their mistakes and support students in dealing with the consequences; and providing a situation wherein they can say "I was finally heard."

To the middle school researchers, Johnston, Markle and Harshburger (1985), advocacy implies that an attitude change is required. At the heart of this change is the teacher, a flexible, positive, creative, person-centered human being. Researchers Weidman and Friedmann (1984) assert that youth advocacy involves helping youth identify alternatives such as street academics or, for older students, work-study programs that are conducive to school completion and skill acquisition. Such a youth advocacy system would help individual youths make informed choices about their employment and educational potentials as well as about the most appropriate settings in which they might realize those potentials.

To Morris, Leinhardt, and Zigmond (1987), advocacy means improving students' self-concept, self-image, self-esteem. It implies that so-called "killer statements," statements that put down or demean students, have absolutely no place in or near the school.

Two other researchers, Wehlage and Smith (1986), assert that advocacy is relevant to the concept of teacher culture. Teacher culture refers to the beliefs held by a school faculty as well as the regular explicit and implicit behaviors that accompany those beliefs. Some examples are our relationships with students, our exercise of authority, our definition of our roles, and our expectations. To Wehlage and Smith, concepts such as collegiality, choice, and ownership are the lenses to use in viewing

the degree of commitment and engagement that teachers have in implementing programs for dropout-prone youth.

The Children's Defense Fund (Edelman 1987) says advocacy is accomplished by offering a "menu" of specific activities that adults--individuals and groups--are willing and able to undertake. Edelman contends that we must not expect people to simply be "for children," but rather we must offer specific ways they can act with their own capacities and beliefs.

To the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (1985), defines advocacy through three basic assumptions: (1) Access of all youth to public education is crucial to the vitality of a democracy as well as to the future well-being of each individual. (2) Communities must continually assess and reassess school policies and practices with this question in mind--Does each policy or practice promote rather than impede access of all children to public education? (3) When students are not learning, it is the school's responsibility to try new approaches until we are certain that every child is learning.

Advocacy means all of these things. The dimension discussed here deals with understanding adolescent development, identifying dropout-prone students, counseling, advising, building self-esteem, developing individualized plans and programs, and making appropriate accommodations whenever and wherever we can.

Adolescent Behavior

One way of becoming an advocate for youth is by getting to know youth. This period is a time for growth and change second only to infancy in its velocity. Interestingly, Lipsitz (1980) points out that there has been a relative "absence of dialogue" about this age group.

Those who work with this age group realize that there exist several problems--not necessarily in working with dropout-prone individuals--but, as Dorman, Lipsitz, and Verner (1985) allege, because there appears to be a considerable "lack of fit" between what we know about young adolescents and what we do with them for 5 days a week. Although this does not mean that we can necessarily be responsible for every aspect of every student's development, we must be responsive to their needs.

As Rogers (1982) testifies, even if adolescence is not critical in the sense of constituting a crisis, it is significant in that attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics established at this point in time relate to those factors in the years ahead. Rogers testifies that this is a period for consolidating coping styles and characteristic ways of solving one's problems. Moreover, it is the beginning of the establishment of decision-making patterns as well as in establishing identity and determining commitments to values and life-styles. In short, *adolescence is a process* for achieving the attitudes and beliefs needed for effective participation in society.

Lipsitz (1979) feels that there are *several myths about adolescence*. One is that "adolescence is a time of tumultuous upheaval during which the best we can do is to hold our breaths, wait for it to pass over, and meanwhile segregate as best we can the turbulent from the rest of society" (p. xvi). As Lipsitz notes, research shows that adolescence for most individuals is a rather stable and relatively serene period

rather than one filled with turmoil. Dorman, Lipsitz, and Verner (1985) concur. Instead of storm, stress, and strife, for a large portion of youth, this period is mainly a progression toward maturity with few or intermittent periods of distress; nonetheless, since profound changes occur, integrating these changes in a way that makes sense can be confusing for many young adolescents.

A second myth is that young adolescents are in a "transitional" stage between childhood and adolescence. Lipsitz (1980) maintains that research shows that every decade the onset of puberty occurs 4 months earlier, yet this important fact has had no effect on policymakers and little effect on professionals. She also maintains that we have not been willing to change our concepts of young adolescent needs.

Another myth is the belief that teenagers form a homogeneous age group when, in reality, the variability of various "ages"--chronological, social, academic, biological, emotional, and intellectual--is one of the most striking and least acknowledged characteristics of this time of life.

As Lipsitz argues so convincingly, these myths are destructive in that they reflect a distrust and even a dislike of this age group. She argues that these myths should be rejected in favor of "a new social concern" for young adolescents.

According to Lipsitz (1984), a central weakness in most schools for young adolescents is the widespread failure to consider school practices in terms of the developmental needs of adolescents "in order either to incorporate responsibility for meeting [these needs] into the schools' academic and social goals or to keep them from being barriers to attaining those goals" (p. 168). She argues that the understanding of young adolescent development needs must not be tangential to, but rather should help form, the central purposes of our middle and junior high schools. Decisions about governance, curriculum, and school organization must flow from our sensitivity to this age group. Developmental responsiveness is an essential ingredient of successful schools.

Much has been written about the developmental needs of young adolescents. What follows is a summary of several key developmental needs and school responses that were presented by Dorman, Lipsitz, and Verner (1985).

The Need for Diversity

The opportunity to try out new things encourages young adolescents to develop curiosity about the world beyond their home, school, and community. It also keeps them "engaged" in their school. Schools can respond to this need by attempting to match varied student interests and abilities with an equally varied environment through a variety of teaching styles, methods, and materials; high-interest exploratory courses; flexible scheduling of both short and long periods based, in part, on the maturity levels of the students as well as the nature of the learning tasks.

The Need for Structure and Clear Limits

Clear and consistent communication with teachers, counselors, and principals helps young adolescents know their roles in a world that increasingly seems full of doubts

and uncertainties. They also need opportunities for self-exploration and self-definition to help answer such questions as "Who am I?" and "Am I normal?" Schools that are responsive express rules and expectations crisply and clearly. These rules and expectations generally are accepted and understood by everyone involved. The most obvious way of ensuring acceptance is to involve the youth--authentically--in establishing rules and understanding the consequences for failing to adhere to them. Young adolescents need the security provided by clear limits. We must also avoid rigid structure and excessive limits that only foster dependency, hostility, withdrawal, and rebellion.

The Need for Competence and Achievement

The opportunity to succeed in school and receive recognition for this success is vital. Feelings of self-worth are absolutely essential for young adolescents to be able to move on to even higher levels of competence. We can respond by emphasizing academics, providing high-quality teaching, feeling and showing positive expectations of all our students, giving honest rewards and praise, and providing opportunities for increased independence and responsibility for students. A variety of teaching methods, a balanced curriculum, and exciting extracurricular activities all provide a framework in which all students can register some type of success.

The Need for Positive Social Interaction with Adults and Other Students

The opportunity to see positive role models can help raise aspirations and expectations, whereas peer interaction can promote skills in living in a democratic community and satisfy the young adolescent's need for social activity. We can respond by encouraging peer interaction, offering small-group learning activities, and providing space for students to gather informally. Positive social interaction between adults and students are aided by adviser-advisee relationships, our participation in activities, and informal contacts outside the classroom.

Interestingly, almost 30 years ago, Friedenberg is reported by Arth et al. (1985) to have predicted what would happen as adults began to withdraw from interactions with adolescents. He identified that this void would be "inundated" by peer group interactions. He apparently noted that maturation for young adolescents develops from two types of interaction--with peers and with adults. Our current decade has witnessed a more than 90 percent increase in homes with school age children headed by lone females; one out of every three of those homes exists at the poverty level. Continuing increases of homes with two working parents is another relevant characteristic of our contemporary society. Today many young adolescents have less contact with adults out of school than at any prior time. The primary significant adult interactions that many middle and junior high school youngsters experience are with us only. This makes the modeling of our responsible behaviors critical for today's youth (Arth et al. 1985).

The Need for Meaningful Participation in Activities in Both the School and the Community

The opportunities for all students to feel they belong enhance their sense of security and opportunities to contribute foster their growing sense of altruism and social idealism. We can respond by establishing meaningful student committees and councils, school improvement projects (for example, constructing recreation areas and learning resource centers). We also can offer students opportunities to contribute to community service projects, again, by working on constructing recreation areas in the community, working with younger children, and assisting with older citizens. The opportunities for service are endless.

The Need for Physical Activity

Opportunities to express energy, relieve tensions, and remove pressures must be provided. We can respond by providing structured outlets to release rather than suppress the physical energy that is so evident. Noncompetitive physical education, physical activities during breaks and lunch time, and opportunities to move around in the classroom are each important.

The continued lowering of the chronological age at which pubescence occurs apparently will bring more of the tasks formerly experienced during the ages 14-18 years into the lives of our middle and junior high school students. These youth are evidently much more sophisticated than their counterparts a decade ago. However, the social and emotional maturity of most young adolescents has not really increased. When we are struck by the physically mature appearance of many young girls and boys, we must not assume they also possess equally social and emotional maturity. In fact, just the opposite may be true; the adjustment problems of physically precocious young adolescents may signal a need for our special understanding and support.

We also should not view surface behavior as indicating social-emotional maturity. To be sure, some youth have matured earlier than others in social and emotional development. However, some are only displaying a thin veneer of sophistication that they mimic from the popular media. Many young adolescents display "streetwise" behavior rather than earlier social and emotional maturity. In misreading this behavior as actual social and emotional maturity, we may mistakenly cut these youngsters off from adult interaction and support they need during this period. These youngsters need more, not less, positive interactions with us at this time in their lives. We need to recognize that middle and junior high school youth need our enlightened support in dealing with a number of very difficult troublesome problems (Arth et al. 1985).

Expectations of Young Adolescents

Low teacher and school staff expectations all too often place invisible barriers between students' expected performance and their potential achievement (Wheelock 1986b). Unfortunately, sometimes these barriers become harsh and explicit. Even when they are subtle, barriers may be evident in simple classroom student and teacher interactions. For example, according to one study (Moran 1981), teachers often tend to praise higher achieving students for academic performance and slower students for good conduct. We tend to call on higher achievers more than students whom we think are less

able. We also tend to allow more time for higher achievers to answer questions. In contrast, sometimes we tend to ask slower students the easiest questions and provide fewer clues while waiting for their response. Moreover, we seem to spend less time listening to low achievers and give them less praise and more criticism, even when their answers are correct.

The National Coalition of Advocates for Students (1985), in fact, places low expectations at the core of what they consider to be the "barriers to excellence." These low expectations, they argue, justify the sorting and labeling practices that often are found in schools. Moreover, the National Coalition feels that although some teachers, counselors, and principals may not believe that at-risk children can learn, low expectations unconsciously influence us to judge student ability based on the previous years' reports, grades, or even conversation with other teachers and to ignore students who may need help but are not assertive enough to ask for it. Some of these not-so-subtle actions send unspoken messages that, nonetheless, are clearly understood-stood--even by youngsters who do not speak English well.

At-risk, inner city kids, despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, can perform at national norms if given "the proper school context" (Hess 1987). In his research, Hess reports that a number of urban school administrators seem to prefer to believe that these students cannot perform. According to Hess, the administrators cite the findings of the 1966 Coleman report, that the only significant variable in judging school performance at that time was family background, in a pernicious way to excuse the non-performance of their own schools. They, Hess claims, have taken that descriptive finding and made it into a prescriptive conviction, namely, that inner city youth cannot achieve national norms. Moreover, they are reinforced in these "mischievous beliefs" by some scholars whose works use an approach that blames the victim by focusing on how the dropout-prone are at best, marginal students.

The Massachusetts Advocacy Center (Wheelock 1986b) interviewed students who said that their "favorite teachers," above all else, held high expectations for them. Howard and Anderson (1978) report in their research review studies a positive correlation between students' academic success and teachers' preference. In one study, teacher preference depended to a large degree on socioeconomic status. In that study, of the 40 children classified by the teacher, not one of the "most preferred" belonged to the lower class. One-half of the "least preferred" were from the lower middle class or below. Not a single student in this group was from the upper class, and only one was from the upper middle class.

McDill, Natriello, and Pallas (1985) also report that when elementary school teachers had higher expectations for students and, hence, were more demanding of them, students respond with greater effort. At the secondary school level, an answer to the related question of the impact of achievement standards on student effort is found in a series of studies by Natriello, McDill, and Pallas (1985). These studies, which examined the standards of high school teachers and the responses of students to those standards, found that in many cases the standards teachers had for student performance were quite low. Certain student groups, notably blacks and Hispanics, especially were likely to experience low standards for their performance. Moreover, the researchers found that students who were not receiving challenging standards often rated themselves as working hard on tasks even though their own objective descriptions of the effort they were devoting to school work reveal them to be exerting minimal effort. These students were likely to have poor grades and low achievement scores. The researchers,

therefore, concluded that these students did not fully appreciate the degree of effort required to learn in high school because they had not been presented with challenging standards.

McDill, Natriello, and Pallas (1985) reported the findings of Natriello and Dornbusch who studied students confronted with challenging standards of the type advocated by recent educational excellence commission reports. High school students presented with challenging performance standards generally devoted more effort to school tasks. In a subsequent study, these same relationships were examined through observations of 38 classrooms. With classrooms classified as high demand, medium demand, and low demand, the researchers found that the higher the demand level in the classroom, the more likely students were to report paying attention in class and spending time on homework. Paradoxically, they noted that student "cutting" was the highest in low-demand classrooms.

Last, in response to the research question How will low-achieving students respond to more demanding standards?, these same researchers find that a high-demand level in the classroom is associated with greater effort by students even when the ability level of the students is statistically controlled. It is in the low-demand classrooms that they found the highest proportion of students reporting that teachers should make them work harder. However, they also found that high-demand classrooms often lose low-ability students. When the pace is too fast, low-ability students report themselves trying less hard in high-demand classrooms than in medium-demand classrooms. The researchers conclude that low-ability students must be provided with additional help as they attempt to meet more demanding standards.

Lipsitz (1984) also has several penetrating insights into this issue. She feels that "it is **not** reasonable that teachers should expect all students to learn, unless learning is a highly differentiated term. It **is** reasonable that their expectations not be tied to race, sex, or class so as to limit students' growth. It **is** reasonable that there be constant reassessment about structural barriers to learning" (p. 187). It is important that teachers have high expectations for **themselves** and believe they are capable of making a difference in their students' learning.

Lipsitz observes that teachers' behavior is not tied only to expectations. In many middle schools, teachers put enormous energy into teaching because of many factors unrelated to the students (e.g., personal sense of mission, colleagues' expectations, the encouragement and evaluation of esteemed principals, the sense of fighting for a cause, and the gratitude of parents and students). "Questions about equally held expectations barely begin to evoke the complexity of their commitment to their students' welfare" (p. 187). Commitment to student welfare is a major aspect of youth advocacy.

A brief "expectations survey" is provided in exhibit 12. This survey indicates various school-related behaviors in terms of "high" and "low" expectations and can serve as a self-analysis guide.

EXHIBIT 12

EXPECTATIONS SURVEY

BEHAVIORS TOWARD STUDENTS THAT SHOW	HIGH EXPECTATIONS	LOW EXPECTATIONS
When teachers indicate what students should be getting out of school, they begin with:	Finding satisfaction in learning and thinking and getting along with others.	Learning how to adjust to the rules and behave well.
When students ask irrelevant questions, teachers:	Provide an answer, even when the question is unrelated.	Ignore the question.
When teachers describe homework policy, they:	Describe assignments that require students to review classwork.	Explain that they do not assign homework because their students are so poor that they have neither the privacy nor the resources to do the work.
When you ask teachers how they help children who learn differently, they:	Describe changes they make in learning activities to address individualized needs--and experiment until they find the right approach.	Respond that they often refer such children for special education evaluations outside the class.
When asking for answers to questions in classroom discussion, teachers:	Allow as much time for low-achieving students as high-achieving students.	Allow more time for high-achieving students to answer questions.
In classroom discussion, teachers:	Call on low-achieving students as often as high-achieving students.	Avoid calling on low-achieving students.

POLICIES TOWARD PARENTS THAT SHOW	HIGH EXPECTATIONS	LOW EXPECTATIONS
Meetings between school staff and parents are held:	At a time and place that takes into account the parents' resources and schedule.	At at a fixed time and place established by the school.
In considering ways in which school learning can continue at home, schools:	Demonstrate ways family members can encourage learning in regular home situations.	Do not believe family members can help in children's learning.

When a student is absent or tardy:	Parents are called at once and asked to take steps to improve attendance.	Student tardiness is overlooked until it has become a regular pattern of the student's behavior.
In reviewing a child's school progress, parents:	Have the opportunity for regular individual parent-teacher conferences.	Are invited to a once-a-year open house.
When letters are sent to parents, they:	Highlight accomplishments and abilities as well as problems.	Focus on problems the student is having.
POLICIES TOWARD TEACHERS THAT SHOW	**HIGH EXPECTATIONS**	**LOW EXPECTATIONS**
When the school is considering new programs or materials, teachers are:	Consulted about new curricula and involved in textbook selection.	Given textbooks and curricula which are selected without their input.
Regular staff meetings mostly focus on:	Discussion of needs and problems teachers are having in an atmosphere that encourages problem solving.	Announcements of events and policy changes that have been made.
Teacher evaluations focus mostly on:	How students are learning.	How students are behaving.

Early Identification

The early identification of consistent characteristics of dropout-prone youth has been a major issue in understanding the complex school dropout problem. The complexity of the problem is intensified by many contributing factors relating to school, family, economic status, race, sex, and personal characteristics. The research strongly suggests that dropping out is not an isolated act but rather a process that occurs over time; it often is the culmination of a complex interaction of events.

A number of researchers and educators believe that potential dropouts can be identified as early as elementary school. Using a potential-dropout profile to identify high risk students, they indicate that prevention measures also may be initiated early to help students complete their high school education. We just hope we are not too late by the time students reach us in the middle and junior high school grades. We think we are on the right track when we speak of early assessment and interventions as important first steps. It is important, for example, to review student records as part of this assessment. Much of the successful educational experimentation during the 1960s and 1970s provide empirical evidence that successful approaches to early childhood education do make a difference in later school success for disadvantaged students (Willis 1986).

Preventive approaches can begin as early as the primary grades through efforts to improve attitudes about the importance of attending school. Studies suggest that by the third grade, discernible patterns of academic success or failure become ingrained in the young child; according to O'Connor (1985), some schools are providing a second chance for those students who are beginning to show early signs of "falling through the cracks." "Interventions can be targeted at transitional periods in the school continuum such as from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school--points at which structural supports within the school change and new freedoms are experienced by students" (Council of Chief State School Officers 1986, p. 2). Middle schools offer a most critical juncture.

Little doubt exists that certain student characteristics relate to early attrition but that the predictive effect of these characteristics vary by locale. For example, Enger and Vaupel (1978) suggest that both students who continue and those who drop out should be compared in order to identify those traits in which differences occur. The availability of data, they suggest, should be considered in determining the optimal selection of predictive dropout characteristics. Such a proposed investigation should precede the formulation of systematic procedures for record keeping.

Although a great deal is known about dropout prevention, much must still be learned about local reasons for dropping out. As Clark (1987) points out, we often continue to focus on the students and their background as causes for dropping out or on the symptoms that lead to it rather than on the actual reasons. He recommends that our research questions focus on why students drop out, that is, we must look beyond superficial explanations to the underlying causes. He suggests that teachers can take the lead in this inquiry by providing technical assistance, data collection, and analysis capacity to the researchers. The purpose of such studies would be to discover the unique needs of our students. These needs, Clark postulates, will depend greatly on the socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnic/racial mix, and achievement levels of high-risk students. Once these needs are identified, dropout prevention programs can be designed, modified, or adopted.

A good bit of our earlier discussion focused on the psychological, behavioral, family, and academic factors that appear to be useful in early identification. For example, Bronfenbrenner (1986) submits that heavy reliance on peers is one of the strongest predictors of problem behavior in general. Two researchers at the University of Wisconsin (Novak and Doughterty 1986) suggest the following clues:

- Attendance--Demonstrates habitual absences or tardiness; skips periods frequently
- Attitudinal--Lacks personal motivation; habitually does not cooperate; reacts negatively toward authority figures
- Behavioral--Creates a destructive atmosphere; shows abuse of school, fellow students, staff
- Educational--Records frequent failures; functions achievement below grade level

- o Emotional--Exhibits emotional outbursts or withdrawal that makes it difficult to function rationally

- o Family-related--Illustrates the following patterns: parent or sibling influence to leave school, broken home, parent with drug/alcohol problem, other members of family dropped out

- o Peer-related--Follows peers regardless of consequences to self (peers tend to be negative toward school); also, may have difficulty relating to peers in a positive manner

- o Self-concept--Demonstrates a low level of satisfaction with oneself

- o Self-prophecy--Has indicated a desire to leave school

The following criteria are used by the New York City Public School System (1986) to select student participants in middle school dropout prevention programs. The criteria must be applied in order, that is, the second criterion may be used only when all students meeting the first criterion have been identified and openings in the program still exist. Students are eligible to participate in middle school dropout prevention programs if they are in grades 8 and 9 in junior high schools or grades 7 and 8 in intermediate schools and--

-- have 30-74 absences in school year;

-- have 15 absences or more for spring;

-- have 25-29 absences and 1 of the following high-risk indicators--

--reading 1 or more years below grade level,
--2 or more major subject failures,
--20 or more latenesses,
--20 or more 1/2-day absences,
--overage,
--limited English-proficiecy;
--participate in the dropout prevention program but are no longer eligible because of improved attendance.

Computers are playing an increasingly larger role in early identification. As the Institute for Educational Leadership (Sheppard 1986) suggests, with computer technology, schools can keep reliable information on dropout-prone students, dropouts, and reentries. Also, Mann (1986a) contends that computers can be extremely useful in identifying young adolescents as they become increasingly at risk. Many youth, he maintains, drop out because they cannot cope with the cumulative effects of what is happening to them. Although most schools also may have a sense of what is happening, computers can be invaluable in helping us keep track of those multiple impacts and alert us before kids reach the danger point, for example, we can analyze poor grades, truancy records, grade retention, discipline problems, family information, and so on.

Effective identification implies that close contact must be maintained with the elementary school and with high schools. It is absolutely essential that we articulate with these other levels if we are to maintain a consistent direction for our total K-12

dropout prevention program (O'Connor 1985). Following are two sample approaches designed by the Florida Department of Education (1986).

Dade County Schools

A potential dropout profile is computerized and sent to secondary school principals. It is used as a probability indicator and as an identification/counseling tool. The principals share the profile with counselors, assistant principals, occupational specialists, and teachers. The criteria include the following: 18 or more absences in a school year (Fridays and Mondays count as 2), 2 or more years older than the average age for the grade level, reading stanine less than 4, attendance at 3 or more schools, 3 or more "Ds" or "Fs" for the current grading period, total days of in-school or out-of-school suspension in 1 school year, and severity (matches 2 or more of the profile criteria).

Orange County District Schools--Winter Park Compact

The compact is directed by a committee that gathers and disseminates information on potential dropouts. The committee--consisting of an occupational specialist, social worker, police liaison officer, teachers, and counselors--developed a profile that includes student grades, attendance records, discipline records, and staff comments. Consultants help the staff set up a computer database and assist personnel in identifying potential dropouts. Checklists are distributed to teachers and staff who make referrals according to specified criteria. In order to identify potential dropouts among entering ninth grade students, the checklist is sent to five feeder schools.

The sample forms shown in exhibits 13 and 14 can be used to identify high-risk youth for dropout prevention activities. The forms have been adapted from *Staying In . . . A Dropout Prevention Handbook, K-12* (Novak and Dougherty 1981). These can be adapted further for your local use.

We cannot allow early identification to become an approach that views the school dropout as what Conrath (1986) calls "a clinical problem," that is, the focus is on what is wrong with the student. Rather we should approach it from what he calls a "systemic problem," that is, how we can make the system more manageable. In Conrath's insightful analysis he contends that approaching the problem clinically allows schools to avoid examining two critical facts: (1) middle school is the first impersonal institution most young people face, and (2) many of these schools (and most high schools) deliver services to young people through fragmented and impersonal methods. Although identifying young adolescents is a positive step, he contends that solving a student's "problem" will not make the system more personal or manageable.

Further, it was reemphasized in a newsletter of the Council of Chief State School Officers (1986) that factors related to premature school leaving often are cumulative, interrelated, and different for different student groups. Hence, even with early identification, no single program or policy can meet the needs of the diverse population of potential dropouts.

EXHIBIT 13

SAMPLE REFERRAL MEMO FOR IN-SCHOOL USE

TO: All staff: teachers, counselors, aides, support staff

FROM: Dropout prevention staff/name of contact person

RE: Referral of Candidates for Dropout Prevention Programs

DATE:

We would like to begin screening students who might be potential dropouts. We are, therefore, looking for students who fit all or some of the following criteria:

-- underachieving

-- poor attendance

-- significant difficulties in reading or math

-- evidence of emotional problems (very low self-esteem, disruptive)

On the bottom, please list the students whom you feel meet these criteria (any or all). Please note any additional criteria which you feel warrants special consideration.

****

STUDENT	CRITERIA	GRADE
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

EXHIBIT 14

SAMPLE REFERRAL FORM FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL USE

I feel that _____ is not experiencing success in school and should get additional help. _____ is in grade _____ at _____ School and has problems in the following areas: _____

_____

_____

His/her age is _____. Another thing you should know is:

_____

_____

In addition, I feel the following problems(s) might be adding to the student's lack of success:

___ school attendance (often absent)

___ low self-esteem

___ is a discipline problem at school and/or home

___ does not see the value of school

___ other areas:

_____

_____

___ does not participate in extra curricular activities

___ does not seem to have any school friends

___ seems to feel rejected

___ by teachers

___ by peers

___ others

Please give more information on the problem area(s) you checked:

_____

_____

My relationship with this studentis: _____

Specify

For more information, I can be reached at: _____

Phone: _____

Please send this form to: _____

Contact person - complete address

Ehren and Lenz, researchers at Florida Atlantic University, and as cited in Florida Department of Education (1986), also make these penetrating observations based on their research into the use and application of "profile characteristics":

- Identification studies with the highest accuracy frequently use data not readily available in student records (e.g., interviews, observations, and peer tracking).

- Some identification systems use "catalyst variables" (i.e., events that immediately precede the decision to drop out). Profiles relying on these variables cause identification to occur too late and ignore more long-term factors.

- Profiles that consist of a list of variables or criteria often do not provide adequate direction because they do not identify the most important factors, account for certain combinations of variables that may be predictive, identify

the critical times at which certain events must occur, and adequately define the variables on the list.

- o Identification systems may not be related to the available interventions. Many systems or profiles contain a wide variety of factors that are not addressed by existing dropout prevention programs in a school district.

- o Although variables such as socioeconomic status, sex, and racial/ethnic group often have predictive power, these are fairly useless when the majority of a school's student population is associated with these variables.

- o Profiles view dropping out as being caused by "student problems" rather than "system or school problems." Recent research indicates that some school characteristics may be as important as characteristics of students attending them and that both points of view must be considered. (pp. 8-13-18)

Wehlage and Smith (1986) indicate that those advocating early identification assume that the characteristics of dropout-prone students are relatively easy to spot in the elementary years and that early intervention is most appropriate. This approach is based on the assumption that academic deficiencies and the failure syndrome that follows are the primary cause of dropping out. The strategies most often advocated are early childhood education programs, remediation (especially in reading and math) and coordinated social services to deal with nonschool problems. Although they concur that there is some merit in this argument, four problems exist when considering the implications of this position.

First, they raise the question of whether or not it is possible to identify with sufficient accuracy the dropout-prone population at an early age. If errors should occur, two questions arise: What are the consequences to those in need of interventions that did not receive them?, and What are the consequences for intervening with students who might not benefit from the treatment or services? Since students become at-risk for different reasons and at different times, we must be in a position to respond appropriately. Not all causes are longstanding; some students drop out because they become pregnant, suffer from drug abuse, react to a family breakup, or are affected by personal problems. Since each condition is not likely to be foreseen in early identification, such intervention is not always possible.

The second concern deals with the issue of the extent the early identification/intervention strategy produces a type of mentality that sees these students basically as "sick." The response calls for diagnosis and treatment by individuals charged with the responsibility of "fixing up" at-risk youth. That is, the problem is with the student. Also, one of the unintended effects perhaps may be to create a new category of "social deviants." Early identification unintentionally may result in early negative labeling that actually may exacerbate some students' problems. The danger of promoting a fragmented strategy of treating students also could divert attention from some of the more fundamental school changes that are needed.

The third point has to do with the issue of what additional interventions middle schools could introduce (assuming successful identification is possible) that are not already part of our repertoire. Schools are committed to teaching basic skills to all youngsters and an array of programs are attempting to do this. Hence, Wehlage and Smith ask these questions: How much more remediation can students profit from?, and

What will such interventions cost in time and energy taken away from other academic and nonacademic activities--including enrichment?

The last point may be the most important one, namely, there is no reason to believe that early identification/intervention will eliminate the need for special programs in high schools for a substantial number of students. Even if early intervention were successful in eliminating the academic problems of some students, a sizeable group whose at-risk characteristics likely will persist and will require continued intervention through high school. An adequate level of academic skills in the early grades does not guarantee the prevention of students from dropping out. According to one study, about 30 percent of the dropouts in Chicago several years ago were reading at or above grave level. In another study, many dropouts were found to be above national norms in basic skills. It was also noted that to the extent schools can implement successful early identification/intervention such practices likely will increase the number of students identified as at-risk. This could result in a "built-in expectation" of special programming for this group from the time of early identification to the end of their school years. Although no identification system is infallible, one carefully designed to avoid these problems and pitfalls can be a useful tool for taking effective preventive action. The concept of youth advocacy implies that we need to develop special programs for those who need them--as long as they need them.

Building Self-Esteem

Wehlage and Smith (1986) report that Wehlage and another colleague found measures of self-esteem among dropouts actually rose after they left school. This suggests that perhaps the students in the study felt better about themselves after leaving an environment that for them produced negative experiences.

Self-perception, self-esteem, self-concept--all are interrelated and all are highly relevant to the dropout issue. According to Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig (1980), self-perception appears to function at three levels: specific situation, categorical, and general. For example, we all are involved in specific situations in which we develop ideas about our knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes. Second, as a function of experience, we all have perceptions about ourselves based on various roles we play and attributes we believe we have. Third, all of us seem to have a general sense of self based on decisions about our "situation experiences" and "categorical perceptions."

Also, according to Beane and his colleagues, self-perception appears to involve these three dimensions: self-concept, self-esteem, and values. The former refers to description we hold of ourselves based on the roles we play and attributes we believe we have. "Self-esteem refers to the level of satisfaction we attach to that description or parts of it. Self-esteem decisions are made on the basis of what is important to us, that is, our values" (Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig 1980, p. 84). This distinction is important for us for two reasons. First, since our values may not be the same as our students' values, we cannot infer that they have positive self-esteem regarding particular aspects of their lives just because we would. Second, when trying to enhance self-perceptions, we need to be certain which aspect of the self we are dealing with.

The literature is filled with assorted insights into these related concepts. For example:

- Researchers and educators tend to characterize self-esteem in a variety of ways; self-esteem, worth, respect, and image all indicate a sense of well-being, feeling good about oneself, a belief that one is lovable and worthwhile. The key factors are a nurturing climate of acceptance and experience with success. (Gordon and Everly n.d.)

- In the scores of research studies that have been conducted on this topic, a persistent relationship apparently has been found between various aspects of self-perception and a wide variety of school-related variables, for example, achievement, perceived social status among peers, participation in discussions, school completion, perceptions of peers and teachers, prosocial behavior, and self-direction in learning. (Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig 1980)

- It appears that self-perceptions are to some extent age-related and are largely influenced by persons we perceive as "significant others." In childhood, parents serve as the most significant others and, hence, have the most influence on self-perceptions. "Questions of self take on major importance in adolescence as that age group confronts the classic identity crisis." (Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig 1980, p. 84)

- Students carry images of the self in several areas as well as the potential for developing more. These include the self as person, learner, academic achiever, peer, and others. Every school experience can affect self-concept, values, and subsequent self-esteem. For this reason, an understanding of how schools might enhance or hinder self-esteem must be a major concern of those responsible for the curriculum. (Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig 1980)

- As individuals get older, their roles increase, their awareness of the environment is more acute and their self-perceptions are more complex. The longer we delay efforts to enhance self-perceptions--or continue to hinder them--the more difficult our supportive role becomes. (Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig 1980)

- Teachers and counselors need to be aware that since general perceptions of self are rather stable, consistent and positive feedback will have more effect than a few random compliments. (Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig 1980)

- It is generally accepted that schools foster learning in a variety of areas, including personal and social development. "Intrinsic to the notion of the 'hidden' curriculum is the idea that the self and social outcomes of schooling are at least as, if not more powerful than, academic outcomes." (Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig 1980, p. 84)

- Vulnerable students must have opportunities to experience success. School projects, therefore, should be developed for young adolescents who feel useless, worthless, or inferior that enable them to help someone who is even more vulnerable. (Gordon and Everly n.d.)

- On the basis of our experience, people who feel good about themselves generally have a sense of humor that is not based upon putting other people down, know how to listen, have a passionate interest in some things, are tolerant of the changing moods of others, appreciate the success of others, have sympathy for the failures of others, are sensitive to the needs of others, are not sure of everything, can offer love unselfishly, and help other people feel good about themselves. (Gordon and Everly n.d.)

The concept of locus of control is closely related to self-esteem. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) argue that implicit in the purpose of schooling are the goals of self-development, self-management, rational decision making, and control of one's circumstances and opportunities through the acquisition of knowledge and skills. These goals, they maintain, should help students acquire positive self-concepts and learn to take responsibility for their actions.

Specifically, in terms of locus of control, Wehlage and Rutter (1986) found that each group generally experienced movement toward a more internal locus of control. The amount of change varied considerably by group. For example, college-bound Hispanics showed the largest change toward internal control; Hispanic noncompleters showed a similar movement although they remained relatively externally oriented. For blacks, the difference between noncompleters and school stay-ins widened substantially. This suggested to the researchers that if the amount of change toward internal control is used as a standard, then the data do not support the argument that noncompleters would have benefited by staying in school (except in the case of blacks). They conclude that dropouts begin with a significantly different orientation toward control and, hence, it may be that the school with its present reward structure cannot be expected to have much impact on this factor. In this sense, according to the researchers, noncompletion may be the appropriate decision for some youth who seek to gain a sense of control through participation in adult activities.

With regard to low self-esteem, it is fair to note that a vulnerable person's self-esteem is lowered when he or she internalizes negative feelings received. This process, termed "identification with the aggressor," not only denotes one of the characteristics of low self-esteem, but also produces insight into how self-esteem is lowered. Negative feelings about one's self undermines confidence that the world presents "a welter of opportunities waiting to be seized." Persons with low self-esteem no longer feel secure in their capacity to cope with the challenges of self-development. Problematic circumstances create a great deal of anxiety for them. Consequently, frustration cannot be easily tolerated. A primary characteristic of low self-esteem is precisely this low tolerance for frustration--coupled with a high anxiety level (Fennimore 1988).

Analysis of the characteristics and dynamics of low self-esteem suggests several general strategies to preserve and promote self-esteem. If individuals with low self-esteem have internalized the negative feedback of others, then it seems natural to surround these individuals with positive, supportive persons to counteract prior negative feedback. Identification with supportive individuals is one broad strategy to foster self-esteem. Another general strategy is suggested by the at-risk students' low tolerance for frustration. If individuals with low self-esteem are easily frustrated, the reasonable course of action is to provide them with more immediate gratification by giving them easily accomplished tasks or focusing on tasks at which they are or can be

proficient. Connected with this approach is the strategy that puts in place opportunities for these students to succeed. Some of these opportunities lie outside those traditionally offered by schools, areas that often are inaccessible due to the students current skill level, past frustrations, and lack of available support (Fennimore 1988).

Fennimore (1988) also summarizes his position with the following simple overview that summarize the suggested efforts to address the problem of low self-esteem:

- Two *major characteristics* of low self-esteem--
  - -- Identification with the aggressor
  - -- Low tolerance for frustration
- Two *general strategies to preserve* self-esteem--
  - -- Identification with positive, supportive individuals
  - -- Provision of immediate gratification
- Two *general strategies to promote* self-esteem--
  - -- Provision of success experiences
  - -- Enhancement of sense of belongingness

Professor Sol Gordon and 1 of his colleagues suggest 20 projects for "vulnerable students" (Gordon and Everly n.d.). The following selected projects seem targeted to middle and junior high school staff:

- Encourage vulnerable students to conduct projects as part of a civic club designed to help the indigent, lonely, and elderly people in the community.
- Recruit students from a community college to act as big brothers/sisters to vulnerable students who, in turn, could be trained for a similar role.
- Ask graduating students to volunteer as "buddies" to work with withdrawn youth. The purpose is to teach social, and other skills such as basketball or dancing.
- Have talent shows, dress-up days, and art contests with prizes for slogans, poems, original songs, posters, and short stories.
- Train a small number of students, as part of a teen peer advocacy project, to provide information about contraception as well as support for peers who don't want to engage in sexual activity.

Gordon and Everly also believe the best response to enhancing self-esteem is by initiating these types of constructive activities, activities in contrast to those focused solely on discussion and/or verbal clarification of values. Education in self-esteem is equally important for vulnerable youth and for society. For these youth, "getting back to basics" first should mean learning to feel good about themselves.

Without this foundation, it is difficult for them to care for, respect, or learn anything else.

Several other relevant suggestions are as follows:

- "This Is Me" is a photographic approach to improving students' self-concepts. Students learn basic photography, including how to use cameras and how to develop and process film. They select subjects through which they explore the past and present and from which they can try to project the future and their relationships with it. Students display their accomplishments, receive recognition for their creativity, and begin to sense a future for themselves. Goal setting evolves as students discover their potential to determine what they will become.

- "Be a Better You," a workshop for junior high girls designed to encourage positive self-concepts, uses a cosmetologist and a public health nurse who provide the participants with instruction in appearance and bodily care. Follow up activities include grooming, clothes budgeting, meal planning, and exercise. (Johnston 1985)

- Another approach is to provide curriculum units specifically designed to enhance self-esteem. For example, through such units as "Developing My Personal Values," "Getting Along with Others," "Living in Our School," or similar interest/need-centered topics, students have the opportunity to explore personal issues and to think about and make decisions regarding self-perceptions. Studying such personally important problems and creating or constructing related projects provides an excellent opportunity to develop a strong sense of self. (Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig 1980)

An excellent set of teacher/counselor workshop materials were developed by a nonpublic school group called "70001 of Indianapolis," a youth training association. It is entitled "What Can We Do?" (For more information, contact 70001 of Indianapolis, 11 South Meridian Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.)

Counseling and Support Services

Often counseling and advising are one-to-one or small-group activities intended to facilitate students' development of self-esteem, self-awareness, understanding attitudes and relationships, and understanding of available options and possible consequences of school and life decisions (Cox et al. 1985). Although all schools provide counseling, some apparently define it in much narrower terms than the definition just presented, that is, students get some guidance in selecting, scheduling, and changing courses. One of the problems, of course, is that many schools have so few counselors that students feel lucky if they talk to a counselor more than once or twice a year. Often, only students with special needs have access to a broad range of counseling services. There is little question that middle schools need to provide more counseling services. In fact, many witnesses at the hearings of the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (1985) link the school dropout problem to the lack of counseling especially at the middle and junior high school level.

A study conducted in California several years ago (Assembly of Office Research n.d.) showed that access to counselors is limited by the low number of available counselors and the large number of students each counselor must serve. The counselor-student ratios for grades K-8 in California from 1976 to 1983 were as follows:

- o 1976-77 school year (1:3905 ratio)
- o 1979-80 school year (1:3704 ratio)
- o 1983-84 school year (1:3445 ratio)

Although more than counseling is needed to deal with such problems as teenage pregnancy and substance abuse, good counseling is fundamental to working out these problems. Yet, according to the Commission of Precollege Guidance and Counseling (1986), middle and junior high schools have fewer guidance and counseling services than high schools. A districtwide K-12 guidance and counseling plan would provide schools with a basis for more direct targeting of students who need help. Although the commission recognizes that adding counseling services at the early and middle school levels might place an added "fiscal strain" on school districts, they "call attention to the convincing evidence from our dialogues and studies of the importance of early intervention and support particularly for students who traditionally have not been well served by the schools" (p. 17).

Few of the recent proposals for school reform address the need for supportive services. Instead they tend to focus primarily on academic aspects, suggesting that schools fulfill only a narrow role in relation to students' lives. Seemingly, they view these services as little more than "frills" that water down the curriculum and lower the standards. The National Coalition of Advocates for Students (1985) disagrees with that position and argues that ignoring problems brought to school by students will not make these problems go away. Many recognize this reality and spend hours helping kids with their problems. However, we should not have to rely solely on the good will of individual teachers or counselors for these important services to meet the needs of young adolescents.

As Cole (1981) acknowledges, the middle school has emerged in the last two decades as a school focused on facilitating the development of young adolescents. A clearly evident guidance function, therefore, must exist in an institution based on developmental tasks of these youngsters. Such a program must be an integral part of the school.

Guidance and counseling at this level should help students make intelligent decisions about present and future educational and prevocational choices (Arth et al. 1985). Students need help in resolving both educational and personal problems. Certainly one of the goals is offering career-related counseling to help young adolescents identify their skills and interests, understand the job market, and make short- and long-range career plans. The Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling (1986) stresses the fact that students from low-income families--rural as well as urban--are less likely to have access to guidance counseling. Also, students who lack access to counseling are more likely to be placed on nonacademic "tracks" and take fewer academic courses.

A young woman returned to school through an alternative program set up to provide counseling and other services to former dropouts. When asked what made her return possible, she simply answered: "They talked to me. They had me bring in my parents and we all sat down and talked. They seemed to care" (National Coalition of Advocates for Students 1985, p. 57). That type of counseling/advocacy must permeate all schools. The entire school--classrooms, hallways, cafeterias--needs to be viewed as legitimate places for such guidance and counseling.

According to Clark and Irizarry (1986), counseling programs for high-risk students in the middle schools place greater emphasis on guidance services and group counseling, parent outreach and involvement, teacher-run counseling sessions, and teacher "ombudsman" programs. Some of the different approaches follow:

- **Guidance services** in some middle schools focus on small-group counseling to improve motivation, self-esteem, and/or decision-making skills and intensive individualized counseling to deal with students' personal problems that affect their attendance or performance. (Clark and Irizarry 1986)

- The **availability and accessibility of support services** needed to help some students remain in school are vital. The school staff assists students in identifying and obtaining help ranging from what can be provided by peers and mentors to such social services as child care, transportation, and health care. (Public/Private Ventures n.d.)

- **High-risk counseling** tends to be conducted one-on-one with students considered to be at-risk of dropping out. Counseling teams generally are assigned by district offices. Frequent home contact is maintained. Variations in the approach focus on ninth-grade students who may have difficulty making the transition to high school and students who have been retained or have insufficient credits to move to the next level. (Clark and Irizarry 1986)

- **Teacher mentoring** involves assigning several (three or four) high-risk students to a teacher who is in daily contact with them. The purpose is to nurture a "bonding" between student and teacher, where students know someone will care if they skip classes, fail courses, don't show up, don't do homework, or need advice. (Clark and Irizarry 1986)

- **Teacher ombudsman** programs in middle schools are similar to teacher mentoring, except that teachers work with small groups rather than one-on-one. The purpose of the group sessions--which often take place before and after school--is to reduce student absenteeism and involve them in their studies. Some schools conduct staff development to help teachers carry out this function. (Clark and Irizarry 1986)

- **Parent outreach** is an integral part of several middle school counseling programs. Parent workshops provide guidance on improving children's self-esteem and motivation, helping them with school or home work, and emphasizing the importance of going to school and having positive attitudes toward it. Several schools hold evening counseling and workshop sessions jointly for parents and students. (Clark and Irizarry 1986)

- **Peer counseling** offers students the opportunity to develop a sense of belonging and usefulness. This often is accomplished through the exchange of positive experiences in a nonthreatening environment. Peer counselors also help one another in various aspects of decision making. Also, students enrolled in peer counseling courses develop communications skills that they use to help others become more self-aware. Some places have set up "family units" composed of four or five peers and a concerned professional or trained volunteer to provide this type of support. (Florida Department of Education 1986)

- **Reality therapy** focuses on teaching youth to be responsible for their actions. The approach--developed by William Glasser--usually is implemented in groups. Its aim is to help youth help themselves and others in the group by developing self-esteem and acceptance of others, which in turn can result in positive, constructive relationships. (Florida Department of Education 1986)

- **Values clarification.** During the middle grades, young adolescents often are subjected to great stress regarding their feelings and beliefs as they pass from dependence on adult patterns toward the acquisition of their own permanent attitudes. Schools have the opportunity--and responsibility--to help students gain basic values essential to their well-being. All teachers should contribute, but the leadership must come from the guidance professionals. Also, close cooperation with parents is essential (Morrison 1978). According to Simon and his colleagues (1972), the research conducted with students who have been involved in values clarification shows that they are less apathetic, less "flighty," more energetic, and more likely to follow through on decisions than those who have not been exposed to such affective activities. Underachievers who have engaged in such activities also tend to experience more success in school.

So much has been written about career awareness and exploration counseling including Herr and Cramer's (1984) *Career Guidance and Counseling Through the Life Span* and Gysbers and associates' (1984) *Designing Careers.* Herr and Cramer's Chapter 8 deals solely with career guidance in the middle and junior high school and, at one point, touches directly on career counseling for early school-leavers. Gysbers' book includes sections by various experts on providing career guidance for the economically disadvantaged and students with handicapping conditions plus career development programs and practices in the schools in general.

In this regard, Otte and Sharpe (1979) report an interesting study done several years ago on the effects of career exploration on three variables: self-esteem, achievement motivation, and occupational knowledge. Their main theme is that knowledge of a variety of possible career alternatives increases the probability of an individual choosing a realistic and rewarding occupation. In addition to class work in their regular classroom, students in the experimental program were exposed to a program with two major emphases: (1) individual "hands-on" work experiences, first in the school and then in business establishments, and (2) organized group guidance activities. The coordinator reinforced positive self-concepts, initiated role playing to enable students to deal with frustrating experiences in new ways, praised students frequently, and displayed personal enthusiasm by working extra to arrange field trips and guest speakers. The hypothesis was that inner-city seventh-graders exposed to one semester of career exploration involving actual work experience (field trips to work sites) and group activities would score higher on measures of variables than similar students not

in the career exploration program. Among other points, the researchers concluded that (1) low-self-esteem individuals are less realistic in evaluating themselves and thus less likely to choose occupations that meet their needs and (2) achievement motivation is fundamental to success and occupational knowledge is a critical factor in decision making.

Several states have identified outreach types of counseling services that might be incorporated in a plan:

- **Student hotline.** A telephone counseling service staffed by professional counselors is set up. Students can call in about personal problems or any questions pertaining to school. Hence, the counselors must be knowledgeable about the school system. Night hours may be included to enable students to call in case of emergencies. The service also could serve as a referral service to local agencies such as hospitals and mental health agencies. This approach often is coordinated through existing community agencies. (Florida Department of Education 1986)

- **Intraschool referrals for extended school day students.** In order to use all available resources, extended school day programs have developed an approach to providing services. The service delivery includes a referral process that enables extended school day students to access the full range of services available to all students: social services, psychological services, migrant education services, services to students with identified exceptionalities, and services available through vocational education. (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction 1986)

- **Former dropouts counseling potential dropouts.** School dropouts who have reentered school provide positive role models for dropout-prone students in that they relate "real-life" experiences and are "living testimony" to the consequences of dropping out. (Florida Department of Education 1986)

The Commission on Precollege Guidance Counseling (1986) recommends that counseling young adolescents should include information about college and financial aid opportunities that traditionally are left until the last few years of high school. This information should be shared with both students and their parents, with increasing specificity regarding the application process for both admission and financing. When choices about courses are made, it is important for students and parents to believe that college is a real possibility, financially and academically. Without this information, young adolescents are likely to make choices that limit rather than advance their aspirations.

Four major roles have been identified for middle school guidance personnel: counseling, consulting, coordinating, and functioning as a specialist in certain areas of the curriculum (Cole 1981). Cole further identifies 16 distinct functions of middle school guidance personnel, including the following:

- Helping students become aware of growth patterns by providing classroom and group guidance in career, personal, and social development

- o Serving as a resource person for teachers, parents, and others for techniques useful with this age group
- o Increasing communication by linking with students, parents, and the community
- o Being active in public relations in the community both for the guidance program and the school
- o Using tests and other assessment methods to promote student self-knowledge
- o Organizing orientation programs so that a smooth transition occurs between the elementary, middle, and secondary levels.

Consultation involves working more indirectly with teachers, principals, parents, peers, and others to bring about change for the individual student. Helping teachers design activities so that students can get along better in groups or planning career education units for students are some ways we act as consultants. Often we describe this age group to parents and others so they can interact with students with more understanding. We also participate as an interdisciplinary team member, conduct parent seminars, and lead staff inservice education on characteristics of young adolescents (Cole 1981).

Effective coordinating likely does allow counselors to refer students to more appropriate resources than the guidance program normally provides. Parents who have trouble allowing their children a measure of independence or families facing acute distress may require extensive external support. Also, inadequate physical or emotional development may require medical or psychological assistance. Serving as a coordinator of services beyond the guidance program enables counselors to greatly extend the scope of our services (Cole 1981).

Many "group guidance" programs fall under the role of curriculum specialist, especially areas such as growth and development, career education and career information, student assessment, and human relations--as well as the process of decision making and values clarification. Curriculum specialists also help other staff find and use personal development materials and design activities for teachers to use in advisory and "homebase" groups. Further, the counselor's role in homeroom programs can include assigning students to homerooms. Leadership skills, academic talent, athletic ability, creativity, and fellowship can be provided in each homeroom and students may be helped with a problem by enlisting the support of fellow homeroom members. Middle school students, generally respond positively to requests to help one of their peers. Such a program also provides a systematic way of working with each student regularly.

The active support of administrators is essential for a fully effective counseling program. Provision of adequate space, staff, and materials is an administrative responsibility, as is generating enthusiasm for innovation in guidance programming. Administrative support for such programs as developmental group guidance prevents criticism of counselors if it is necessary to have students miss class occasionally for group meetings. Administrators can also provide direct guidance to students by assuming responsibility for an advisory or homebase group (Cole 1981).

One program that uses a coordinated approach to counseling is the HOLD Helping Overcome Learner Dropouts Project (1986). HOLD has developed a classroom guidance manual, a peer counseling manual, and an educational clinic supplement. The classroom

manual contains lesson plans and support information for parent groups, self-esteem groups, and classroom guidance activities. The peer counseling manual has lesson plans for a peer counseling class. The supplement provides classroom guidance, peer guidance, and tutoring activities rewritten for "education clinic students." The key program component is the classroom counselor. Counselors are college students, peer counselors, community members, teachers aides, or teachers who assist the student in developing and implementing "success plans." They keep communication flowing between all the significant adults in the student's life and provide support for the student. HOLD is a prescriptive counseling program designed to increase attendance, self-esteem, and academic success of potential dropouts. Its target students are identified in junior high school and the students are counseled to develop individual success plans. The strategies include peer counseling, attendance monitoring, parent information, effectiveness training, and classroom guidance (The HOLD Project 1986).

Finally, Bergmann (August/September 1986) presented the following 10 steps for counseling middle grade students:

- o Acknowledge the presence of the student even if you're busy; make positive eye contact.
- o Give the student your full attention or tell him or her when you will be able to do so. Maintain eye contact if possible.
- o Move to a quiet, private place.
- o If the student doesn't tell you the problem, but obviously has one, use a "sense" statement: "I sense that you are troubled, angry, upset--May I help?"
- o Offer reassuring statements that show you are listening.
- o Paraphrase what the student has said. Be sure you understand what real message is being given. Try not to show shock or surprise.
- o Don't offer solutions to the problem. Have the student offer possible alternatives.
- o Explore the consequences of each alternative with the student. Don't preach or profess your own values.
- o Have the student tell you what action they think they will take. Try to get them to commit to some trial solution.
- o Arrange to meet or talk with the student later the same day or early the next day. This follow-through is crucial to the student.

Effective school research consistently points to the important counseling role of teachers, administrators, and other adults in the school. Schools should offer incentives to their staff to become better trained in working with at-risk youth and to improve their counseling skills. Also, these attributes could be taken into account when hiring new staff where increased numbers of at-risk youth are enrolled (Sheppard 1986). Additional support personnel--guidance aides, clerical persons, and other

paraprofessional--can free us of much of our routine work and allow us to do the job for which we are trained (Cole 1981).

Advisor/Advisee Programs and Interdisciplinary Teams

An advisor-advisee program offers regularly scheduled times during which students have opportunities to interact with teachers and fellow students about school and personal concerns. This interaction allows teachers to become involved in general advising at the classroom level and to recommend students with special problems to guidance personnel and/or parents for follow-up (Arth et al. 1985). According to Arth and his colleagues, advisor-advisee programs are not meant to replace but rather to supplement the counselor's role. Such programs permit guidance staff to work with individuals and groups of students in order to deal with problems at their onset. Often the problems are of academic importance because they affect student learning.

This strategy is aimed at reducing feelings of alienation and anonymity, particularly by students in large schools. Assuredly, students who have the opportunity to participate in such programs benefit from one-on-one interactions as well as from the understanding that there is at least one person "out there" who is an understanding advocate (Bergmann August/September 1986).

Haupert (n.d.) provides a number of suggestions for advisory activities--including service projects and fund-raising activities that provide students with opportunities to make decisions (such as where the money will go). Haupert also suggests that advisory activities can be used as a central communication vehicle through student council, clubs, and athletic programs. Middle school students, she notes, also enjoy the opportunity to have an "adolescent novel" read to them once a week or to keep a journal of their feelings. Bergmann's many suggestions (August/September 1986) also are instructive, particularly regarding what schools can do to plan and implement these programs. Her analysis is valuable in that she places advisor-advisee programs as one of nine essential components of middle school guidance programs:

- In addition to guidance professionals, all teachers should possess basic counseling skills. Although teachers often are untrained in counseling, they can be given training in listening, group dynamics, and conferencing. This does not mean that they should become guidance experts--only that they become "sensitive to" guidance issues.

- Both teachers and principals must recognize the need for both informal and formal guidance. Principals must encourage teachers to teach decision making, problem solving, and responsibility as a part of their daily curriculum.

- Advisory sessions give students a consistent adult and peer group that meets regularly to give them practice in skills needed to cope with the issues of growing up. Therefore, time must be provided for advisory groups to meet. (Bergmann suggests at least 20 minutes in any one session; some groups meet daily, others twice a week.)

- o Teachers and other school adults should be trained in group process skills before they become involved in formal advisory programs.

- o Inservice activities should be planned to help teachers prepare for the program and front-line, "one-to-one" counseling. (Teachers--as well as students--need support.)

- o The formal advisory program should be written as a sequenced guidance curriculum with goals, activities, and methods of evaluation. Some programs have one topic per month with lists of activities that groups can discuss or develop; some programs select 1 or 2 months as "community service project months."

- o Health information must be made available. Topics such as alcohol, drugs, and sex frequently are on the minds of young adolescents.

- o The "guidance model" should permeate the curriculum. Looking at decisions made in history, for example, can help students develop sensitivity to how persons make choices.

- o Parents should be invited to participate in discussions. Parent education programs also can focus on guidance issues.

Bergmann (August/September 1986) maintains that the implementation of an effective advisory program takes about 3 years. She suggests starting with a pilot program of a small group of interested teachers. Counselors help provide the needed structure by gathering background information and compiling resources needed to get the program off the ground. Bergmann also provides a number of initial approaches such as exploring advisory models in other middle schools, using homeroom time for guidance issues rather than administrative issues, and assessing opportunities for guidance in the curriculum.

In *Advisor-Advisee Programs: Why, What, and How,* author Michael James (1986) anticipates and answers many questions. First of all, he places the topic in its proper context, namely, affective education in the middle school--the responsibility to assist in social and emotional as well as academic growth. One of the reasons for the limited existence of affective education programs appears to be the lack of teacher preparation for dealing with the nonacademic aspects of education. Often teachers simply feel ill-prepared. James presents detailed descriptions of six successful programs that illustrate (as his title suggests) why, what, and how-to-do it. His analysis of problems and the many questions on program, adviser, and advisee issues are extremely valuable.

Paul George (1982) details four operational phases of Interdisciplinary Team Organization (ITO): organization, community, team teaching, and governmental. In the first phase, George maintains that an authentic ITO does not exist unless several organizational conditions are met, for example, teachers and students on the team are located in the same area of the school, teachers generally share the same schedule, and at least two or more subjects are taught to the students by the same combination of teachers.

In phase two, a sense of community must be nurtured. This need must be recognized, goals set, and activities conducted toward that end. Also, both students and teachers need to sense the community feeling. As we know, even we can feel "burnout" and withdraw psychologically from the life of the school, and there often is the need to reestablish our feelings of the school as a community.

The third phase, team teaching, demands the kinds of communication skills that only the more sophisticated educators possess." Teamwork especially in curriculum and instruction demands an entirely different set of planning skills than does individualized teaching.

Last, phase four, governmental, implies that power sharing and group policy making are both the product and process of ITO; this likely requires some form of what George terms a representative government system. As George concludes, the interdisciplinary team organization is more complex and considerably more variable than educators once believed. However, it also appears to be a more effective and a somewhat hardier variety of educational innovation than might have been expected. George notes that as educators learn more about the structure and function of the various phases of team organization and how to facilitate them, the interdisciplinary team concept seems even more to become a permanent component of educational practice in the middle grades.

What Is Accommodation?

Miller, Leinhardt, and Zigmond (1987) define accommodation as environmental responsiveness to the needs and/or desires of students, or an effort to adjust certain mechanisms of the school to bring them closer in line with adolescents' developmental needs. It also is a willingness to compromise in order to reconcile student needs and educators' "demands."

The goals of accommodation are to modify the demands made of students, to provide support for students in meeting those demands, and to provide alternate means by which students may meet these demands. Accommodation operates at various levels, for example:

- **Institutional accommodation** is a concern for student needs that is reflected in the policies and process which govern the school, in policies that aim to keep students functioning in school, or when some policy is adapted--or overlooked--for individual students or particular groups.

- **Classroom accommodation** reflects adjustments in response to students' learning levels and capabilities. Most classroom accommodations have to do with adjustments in setting demands. These may take the form of simplifying a task or reducing the complexity of a presentation. Other modifications are reflected in ways we help students enhance their performance.

- **Personal accommodation** is a response to meet the personal needs of individual students. It is reflected in the ways in which class time is allocated to attend to personal rather than academic matters; or, it may relate to the personal interest that we show in students.

At the institutional level, accommodation is noted in two respects: (1) the policies that govern the school reflect a concern for maximizing a student's chances of successfully meeting the school's demands, and (2) the policies take on a degree of flexibility that enables the staff to adjust conditions to individual circumstances. One of the best examples of this is the school response to a fairly strict attendance and promotion policy that had serious implications for at-risk students since it would make it "virtually impossible" for those with poor attendance to pass any of their classes and, thus, ensure retention.

Institutional accommodation is seen in a policy adjustment that gave students a second (or more) chance to pass. By attending an after-school program, students were allowed to "buy back" unexcused absences and clear their records. Attendance of three after-school sessions (1 1/2 hours each) "bought back" one unexcused absence. Hence, theoretically it was possible for a student to miss up to 45 days in the beginning of the year and still have enough days left to make up the time in the after-school program. During the after-school period, students attempted to complete their school work.

Classroom accommodations are the ways teachers modify their demands in response to students who may have trouble meeting higher levels of demand. It is addressed in the selection of curriculum materials, instructional delivery methods, required academic tasks, and assessment procedures. In terms of curriculum materials, this means simplifying tasks required of the students as well as the content of courses. For example, one teacher in the study confided that each math class was actually taught at a level below the one suggested by its title. Thus, a class listed as "academic" was actually taught at a "general" level, and a "general" class was taught at the "remedial" level.

Accommodation was further evident in the way teachers delivered instruction. Some chose a means of delivery that lessened the skills required of students to acquire information. For example, social studies students typically are required to draw information from reading the text. Students in one class, however, were almost never required to exercise such skill because the teacher read the text aloud. As students followed, the teacher stopped intermittently to define terms, give examples, or paraphrase the main ideas.

Two other forms of delivery were observed that helped students who had poor notetaking skills to record important information. One was a notetaking guide that consisted of a ditto outline of information that the teacher reviewed. In various places in the guide, important information was left blank and students were asked to fill in the missing information. In a variation of this technique, the teacher wrote on the chalkboard or overhead projector slide an outline of the important points that students copied. By and large, these notetaking guides presented the material in such a way that independent thought was unnecessary.

Evaluation of student performance reflected accommodation in several ways. First, student grades were determined not only by their test scores, but also by the number of homework assignments students completed. Second, even during times of academic accountability (such as during testing), teachers often gave students "a break" to enhance their performance. Also, an extremely high degree of overlap existed between tests and instruction. A final example of accommodation in assessment was evident in the relatively low levels of cognitive demand of the tests themselves, a natural out-

come of the high degree of overlap between study guides, review sheets, and the tests themselves.

Last, personal accommodation relates to the personal relationship between individual students and teachers and to the general level of teacher involvement with students, their expressions of interest, acceptance, and support. It also manifests itself in teacher responsiveness to individual student needs, either academic or non-academic.

After over 200 classroom observations and interviews with students, the researchers' impression was that although accommodation may be helpful in reducing extreme levels of "disengagement," it did not necessarily promote active engagement. Indeed, they conclude it may have some unintended negative side effects that limit the students' academic engagement and what they get from school. One side effect is the expectations students develop that accommodations always will be made. These expectations are obvious at the institutional as well as personal level. For example, one student was unconcerned that he was not meeting attendance requirements because he expected that some "arrangement" would be made to help him pass, as had been done before. A second side effect is that school learning did not require even moderate levels of active engagement with the instructional content. For example, some students apparently spent a great deal of time "shuffling" information from one form to another without really absorbing anything. They copied information into their notebooks, read it aloud, recopied it on their homework papers, but often paid little attention to the information itself. Some students participated in discussions and did well in homework assignments as long as the study guides or outlines were in front of them. They ran into difficulty, however, every time they were required to use the information without the guide. Also, students apparently asked few questions or demonstrated much curiosity. Last, a third side effect was student boredom and apathy. Because students were studying low-level curricula, they apparently felt bored by their academic experience and felt they had been exposed to the same material too often.

Some forms of accommodation may not be the best preparation for the world beyond school. As the researchers observe, believing that there always will be a "second chance," learning that to get through without significant challenges, and being bored may teach students to look for second chances, not to seek challenges or to be persistent.

Discussion Items

1. How well are we meeting the developmental needs of our students?
2. How are we attempting to be responsive to their various developmental needs (e.g., for diversity, for structure and clear limits, for competence and achievement, for positive social interaction with adults and other students, for meaningful participation in activities in both the school and community, and for physical activity)?
3. What are our expectations for our students?
4. How do we "rate" on the Expectations Survey (see exhibit 12)?
5. What specific procedures should we consider with regard to "early identification?"

6. How can we avoid the various problems--caveats--that relate to "early identification?"
7. What can we do to ensure that we have developed a consistent direction for our total dropout prevention program, K-12?
8. How can we build self-esteem in our students--all of them, not just the dropout-prone? What specific strategies can we use?
9. What counseling and support services are we now providing? What other services might we provide?
10. What related programs do we have in place (e.g., teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and so forth)?
11. What are we doing with regard to referrals to other appropriate community agencies?
12. What are we doing with regard to career-related counseling? What is our approach to begin developing employability skills?
13. What specific types of counseling might we offer that we do not offer currently?
14. What "outreach" types of counseling services might we provide?
15. Is the environment in which our counselors operate conducive to an effective program?
16. What counseling roles can classroom teachers play?
17. What counseling roles can administrators play?
18. What are appropriate counseling roles for parents and other individuals in the community?
19. What staff development programs are needed with regard to counseling?
20. Do we have an advisor-advisee program--and does it appear to be effective?
21. Do we use interdisciplinary teams--and do they appear to be effective?
22. What is our (realistic) conception of "accommodation," and how do we see it in terms of "advocacy?"

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WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TODAY?

Additional Planning

Goodlad (1983b) maintains that there needs to be extensive dialogue at the school and district levels regarding the means of fulfilling our goals. He believes the agenda of teachers, counselors, and principals should include both dialogue and action on sensitive matters of curriculum and instruction that appear to be resistant to change. He suggests that we set into motion a continuing planning process that focuses first on the conditions enhancing--or inhibiting--the healthy functioning of our school and then to create a capability for school renewal. Results do not come overnight; they require a sizeable investment of time and energy.

A number of specific suggestions for planning dropout prevention strategies are available. The literature is "teeming" with "this list of five points" or "that list of seven suggestions." For example, Willis (1986) recommends four broad planning activities: (1) acceptance of the strategy, (2) identification of specific dropout prevention components, (3) implementation of a delivery system, and (4) evaluation. Uhrmacher (1985) presents a seven-step plan: (1) gathering interested people--and establishing goals, (2) finding sources of support, (3) determining what needs to be done, (4) involving students as much as possible in the planning, (5) soliciting support in the school for the proposed programs, (6) moving the projects from pilot status to full-fledged programs, and (7) expanding them to other schools as needed. His suggestion is to start small but plan long-term. Potential sources of support include state remediation funds, state or federal vocational funds, state dropout prevention funds, state summer school funds, local or state Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds, local education funds, or special project funds generated by the state general assembly.

Dougherty and Palen (n.d.) also offer several planning suggestions for seeking support from the school's administrative staff and school board, including the following:

- Document and describe the students leaving the school system, including the reasons for leaving.
- Determine the additional state aides that would be received if dropouts, non-completers, and early school leavers stayed in school.
- Develop a file documenting school staff time, activities, and the like devoted to students identified as potential dropouts. This report could help establish the need for dropout prevention efforts, staff, adjusted staff responsibilities, and the like.
- Collect baseline data so that hard data can be collected later to indicate success of the efforts.
- Meet with administrators/school board members on an individual basis, not always in groups or at formal meetings.

- Identify the leaders among the administrators and school board. Gaining their support will help facilitate gaining support of other administrators or board members.

- Determine whether or not an administrator or board member has been assigned the responsibility of dropout prevention. Find out what they are doing, what they think should be done, and so forth.

- Identify a successful dropout prevention program in the system--or elsewhere. Find out why and how it was planned and implemented, who was involved, and why it has been well received and/or funded.

- Conduct a follow-up of noncompleters (e.g., employment status, later participation in the educational system, participation in public assistance programs, and such). Compare this to the cost of helping the individual stay in school.

- Document the success of current or similar programs through case studies, staff evaluations, community reactions, and the like.

- Prepare appropriate written reports, presenting the data in a manner that is easily understood.

Other planning considerations are as follows:

- Describe the problem as it affects the school and community. Since dropping out often is a symptom of other problems, consider the related factors. Describe the strengths of the school and the community that can be brought to bear. ("Dropout Prevention" n.d.)

- State the objectives in measurable terms. They also should have specified beginning and ending dates. Set priorities among them. ("Dropout Prevention" n.d.)

- Consider the legal and ethical aspects. Compulsory attendance laws are an example of local factors that need be addressed. Ethical considerations go beyond what is prescribed by law. Such considerations focus on the impact a dropout prevention strategy will have both on students and the community. (Willis 1986)

- Community characteristics influence the program design and structure. Variables such as unemployment rate, job opportunities, and availability of various services need to be considered. (Willis 1986)

- School characteristics also affect the strategy. This includes not only the physical setting but also resources, staff and student attitude, availability of services (e.g., counseling, career education, and special interest activities) as well as funding. (Willis 1986)

- Articulation also is an important planning consideration. The expectations for effective middle schools must be firmly rooted in how the middle-level program helps the student bridge the gap between elementary and high school. Articulation seeks to minimize gaps and overlap in program expectation as students move

from one school unit to the next. The middle-level program must be planned in cooperation with the elementary school. The planning should encompass both academic and human developmental concerns. (Arth et al. 1986)

The following questions, adapted from Novak and Dougherty, (1986) are designed to assist with the planning process:

- Has the school staff noticed any changes in attitudes toward school among students? Do they have any ideas about what might be affecting these changes?
- Is there any indication that students seem dissatisfied with school?
- Is the staff concerned about the increasing number of single parent families and the corresponding effect that it has on students?
- Are parents of potential dropouts interested in the educational activities of their children?
- Have community members voiced their concern about what happens to dropouts who remain in the community?
- Are local social service agencies overburdened by young people needing service due to various economic and social reasons (e.g., unemployment, child abuse, divorce)?
- What additional planning steps do we need to consider? What should the planning process include in our situation?
- How do we respond to these critical planning questions: Where do we stand? What is the problem? Where do we want to go? How will we get there? Who will do it and when? How will we know if we have succeeded?

Evaluation Techniques

With the exception of 24 programs validated by the federal government's Joint Dissemination Review Panel in 1972, there is little evidence that dropout prevention programs have been significantly evaluated. Although most programs keep data on attendance, graduation, and academic progress, according to Clark and Irizarry (1986), few have been analyzed extensively to determine the causes of their apparent success and how they compare to regular school programs in terms of reduced dropout rates.

There are sufficient reasons for conducting evaluations. Untested assumptions about program effectiveness without appropriate evaluation cause inflated success stories. Monitoring programs is necessary to ensure that they are being implemented according to plan. Data are crucial especially when additional funds are required to sustain or expand a program. Decision makers want to see data showing achievement gains, improved attendance, and the reduction of suspensions and expulsions. Without supportive data, programs can only be considered as "ideas with potential." Although evaluation normally occurs prior to the end of a project or school year, it must be

thoroughly planned and implemented all year in order to produce valid results (Florida Department of Education 1986).

Potential objectives must specify at least these three things: the outcome to be produced, when or during what time period the outcome will be produced, and the degree to which the outcome will be produced.

Clark and Irizarry (1986) maintain that (1) much time and effort will be wasted unless we provide evidence that selected program components are actually the causes for reduced dropout rates and (2) the costs of such programs are reasonable in light of the measured outcomes. The two researchers also submit that evaluation is difficult due to variations in the definitions of dropouts and the ways they are counted. For example, differences in (1) cohort choice (age versus grade and grade configurations), (2) enrollment accounting (an official count at one point in time versus average daily attendance or average daily membership), (3) exclusion of special groups (e.g., learning disabled, alternative school students, and pregnant teenagers), (4) use of school withdrawal/discharge codes (e.g., some schools count students entering the military as dropouts and others do not), and (5) tracking procedures (i.e., the circumstances under which a student is considered a dropout) greatly hinder the collection of comprehensive, standardized data. Without an accurate database, changes caused by program interventions cannot be measured validly or reliably. On the other hand, when data for individual programs are systematically collected, program-specific evaluation is quite feasible.

A most important evaluation consideration is the criteria used for program effectiveness evaluation. Clark and Irizarry (1986) submit that improvements in attendance, graduation rates, courses passed, and achievement test scores are each appropriate measures. However, they maintain that selecting reasonable outcomes can lead to a narrow definition of solutions. For example, a program that increases attendance and graduation rates but does not result in improved reading scores may or may not be considered successful. On the other hand, programs that are expected to improve most or all aspects of student performance may not be considered successful because their goals are too ambitious. Defining success or failure is not always an easy task.

Evaluation experts regard the following indicators as significant: reduced dropout rate; increased number of dropouts who return to school; reduced unexcused absence rate; reduced nonpromotions; reduced number of courses failed; reduced discipline problems as measured by numbers of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions; improved achievement test scores; improved grades; increased participation in extracurricular activities; and improved attitude toward school ("Dropout Prevention" n.d.).

The two specific evaluation approaches to be considered are formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is ongoing evaluation that looks at the ongoing processes and attempts to make "midcourse corrections" as needed. The Florida Department of Education report (1986) emphasizes that formative evaluation (or "implementation information") must be collected in a timely fashion for those responsible for program administration. Timing is critical because the purpose of formative evaluation is to provide feedback on how activities are operating so that problems may be corrected in time to "fix" the overall program. They raise four major questions for this evaluation phase:

- **Who should be responsible for gathering formative evaluation/implementation data?** Generally, the responsible persons are part of the program's staff, that is, those who already have access to various types of data. However, an external evaluator may be chosen since often they may be more objective and may have special expertise.

- **What types of formative information will be needed?** The specific type of information depends on the nature and scope of the program. Consider--

  -- staff participation (number, qualifications, training provided, attitudes toward program, degree of involvement, problems),

  -- administrative support (level of support, financial support, space, equipment, communication lines, problems),

  -- program activities (specific activities, time allocations, level of participation, perceived adequacy of activities, problems),

  -- community involvement (specific agencies, level of advancement, perceived adequacy, problems),

  -- student factors (identification of target groups, number of participants, time in program, level of satisfaction, behavior, achievement, problems).

- **When will the information be obtained?** Since the timing of formative evaluation is so essential, implementation data collection procedures must be built into the program and become a routine duty for the staff.

- **Who will receive the results of a formative evaluation?** All those involved in administering the program should receive formative evaluation results. Regular meetings with staff should be scheduled in order to assess progress and plan necessary modifications. Periodic reports also should be considered for higher-level decision and policymakers.

Summative evaluation often requires a good deal more sophisticated data analysis than does formative evaluation. Again, the Florida Department of Education report (1986) recommends that in planning summative evaluation data collection we need to consider the following points: planning activities early to avoid missing opportunities to collect data, making certain that adequate "prep time" has been allowed, making certain staff have been designated and trained, and ensuring that adequate time is allowed to accomplish objectives before assessing outcomes. The report also suggests that the plan for data collection consider the following data sources: student achievement (usually measured by norm or criterion-referenced tests); attendance and truancy (suspensions, referrals, expulsions); program (students served, staff, facilities, cost); academic (promotions, retentions); teacher performance (classroom observations and teacher evaluations); and parent involvement (records of volunteers, participation in school activities). Also, the following are examples of data that may have to be collected using special instruments or procedures: student, teacher, and parent surveys of attitudes or perceptions about the program; community involvement and levels of participation; student achievement; analysis of teacher characteristics and behaviors

related to student achievement; assessment of the use of special instructional strategies; and summaries of student records.

The selection of appropriate instruments depends on the kind of information needed to answer the evaluation questions. A number of instrument types should be considered: norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, questionnaires, interview guides, structured narrative reports, observation record sheets, rating sheets, log sheets, and record summary forms. Since each type has its own strengths and weaknesses, the instruments should be considered in the light of criteria developed for a specific evaluation: Does the instrument adequately measure what is needed? Is it appropriate for the target population? Is it easy to administer and score? Is its cost, administration, and scoring reasonable and within our budget?

The Florida report recommends analyzing data very carefully before interpreting results. Statistical techniques are likely to be employed in all such evaluations and, although descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, proportions, and percents all are used to describe results, more sophisticated statistical techniques have a place in program evaluation. Last, when large data sets are collected, the use of a computer is essential.

Staffing Patterns and Staff Development Programs

Staffing is undoubtedly one of the most important considerations in designing dropout prevention programs. Program coordinators often suggest that dropout prevention staff is key to the program's success (Novak and Dougherty 1986). One of the problems in replicating dropout prevention efforts is that the success of the effort often depends on the personal characteristics of the staff who run the program. As Novak and Dougherty suggest, the characteristics of an "ideal teacher" read like the prerequisites of "sainthood." Dropout prevention program coordinators often suggest, however, that teachers working with dropout-prone students must be closer to the ideal than most teachers. They should have a strong sense of personal values and a good self-concept since often the rewards of working in dropout prevention programs are not immediately evident. There is a need to care about students and to be interested in more than their academic lives. As we said earlier, we need to hold high expectations while being flexible enough to listen and to compromise.

According to Novak and Dougherty, many program directors when surveyed were nearly unanimous in their belief that the teacher's or counselor's academic preparation is not as important as their ability to relate to young adolescents. "Good" dropout prevention personnel, they note, have been drawn from counseling, adult ed, voc ed, and all academic backgrounds. The dropout prevention person also must be an above average teacher, one who can "seize the instructional moment." He or she must know when to deviate from the daily lesson and attempt to meet student needs (i.e., when it might be necessary to talk through a problem).

Johnston and Markle (1986) summarize characteristics of effective middle school teachers, which parallel in many ways to the characteristics of effective teachers for dropout prevention programs. For example, effective middle school teachers--have a positive self-concept, demonstrate warmth, are optimistic, are enthusiastic, are flexible, are spontaneous, accept students, demonstrate awareness of developmental levels,

demonstrate knowledge of subject matter, use a variety of instructional activities and materials, structure instruction, monitor learning, use concrete materials and focused learning strategies, ask varied questions, incorporate indirectness in teaching, incorporate "success-building" behavior in teaching, diagnose individual learning needs and prescribe individualized instruction, and--most important--listen (pp. 16-17).

Dropout prevention program coordinators indicate that effective staff are those who volunteer to participate in these programs (Novak and Dougherty 1986). Respected teachers who volunteer to staff such programs lend credibility to the program.

According to Novak and Dougherty, all of the staff should be accounted for in the overall pattern so that the program can be well coordinated. Further, it is recommended that the dropout prevention director's position be established at the central office level to coordinate each program designed to impact on high risk students. Staff development programs and inservice activities then provide opportunities to foster a sense of ownership on the part of staff toward the dropout prevention program.

An important ingredient in staff development is skill development. Priority should be given to approaches that encourage exploration of attitudes and values. Techniques such as role processing and forced choice exercises often are more effective than group discussion when the objective is to examine personal attitudes and behaviors.

Staff development must be realistic, reflecting the needs and situations of students. Staff should be intricately involved in developing such programs. A needs survey should be conducted to determine special emphases for programming. Most staff bring a background of experience that makes them especially sensitive to the realism of the activities and presentations. Therefore, when techniques such as role playing or case studies are used, they should reflect realistic encounters rather than contrived events. A way to achieve this is through the preparation of case studies. Teachers and counselors can prepare such case studies based on personal experiences.

Communication between the regular classroom staff and the dropout prevention staff is vital. This may take the form of classroom teachers participating in the referral process of the school's dropout prevention program. Another example is having classroom teachers help design the specific curricula for the program. Teachers serving as members of an advisory committee is another approach. Teachers also feel more "empowered" when they are meaningfully involved in selecting students for a special program, if that is the direction selected.

Administrator Roles

Research on effective schools consistently shows the critical role of principals in establishing the overall school climate in which the teaching-learning process occurs. As Grossnickle (1986) concludes, the key to an effective dropout prevention program is strong administrative leadership in many areas: curriculum, counseling, communication with parents, staff development, coordination with community groups, and so on.

Two words keep reoccurring in effective school research: leadership and vision. Lipsitz (1984) zeros in on the idea of vision when she reports that each of the effective schools she observed in her studies "has or has had a principal with a driving

vision who imbues decisions and practices with meaning, placing powerful emphasis on why and how things are done" (p. 174). Principals of such schools also are able to articulate their vision and have the continuing energy to work toward it, step by step, year by year.

As Lipsitz puts it, they "are good enough leaders to leave a legacy behind their staff, a powerfully defined school, an educated community, and a tradition of excitement, sensitivity, and striving for excellence" (p. 178). Moreover, they are not "wasteful dreamers" who expend their energies on the unattainable. Instead they follow the path of "hard rock practicality." They do not talk about abstract solutions but rather about the nature of schooling.

Principals at schools with lower dropout rates were assessed to be stronger overall leaders (Hess 1987). Data suggest that the type of leadership role the principal assumes may affect the dropout rate in several ways. First, the principal who strongly enforces student discipline ensures a more orderly atmosphere. Second, the effective principal communicates a clear set of expectations. Third, the principals in schools with lower dropout rates tended to have a more clear vision or ideology for the school. Last, the principal of the schools with lower dropout rates generally used staff more effectively. Lipsitz (1984) concurs that the effective principal's authority is derived from acknowledged competence. They are authoritative, not authoritarian, leaders.

Creating Effective Middle Schools

The Center for Early Adolescence at the University of North Carolina has been a valuable source in identifying characteristics of effective middle schools. The center's research on issues in middle grades education, for example, specifically notes that intensive dropout prevention efforts must begin at the middle grades, for it is at this level we must determine which interventions are most effective. Although school attendance is mandatory to age 16 in most states, many educators are recognizing that decisions to drop out are frequently shaped during the middle-grade years. A critical realization is that middle schools and community organizations serving youth must collaborate to address issues such as dropout, pregnancy, and drug abuse prevention. It is recognized that "nested problems" underlie dropping out of school, adolescent pregnancy, and drug abuse. These are not "singular problems" that can be solved with isolated programs. Unfortunately, examples of successful collaboration between schools and other youth-serving groups are not plentiful. Competition for funds, "turfdom," misconceptions of each other, and lack of resources are barriers to be overcome.

The Massachusetts Advocacy Center (Wheelock 1986b), for example, present these five points: (1) effective schools have a strong sense of mission with an instructional focus emphasizing basic skills; (2) an orderly and pleasant climate characterize effective schools; (3) the school principal is a strong instructional and administrative leader; (4) effective schools base everything they do on the assumption that all children can achieve; and (5) effective schools perform careful and frequent evaluation of student progress. The advocacy center also presents a more extensive checklist originally developed by John Lounsbury, former president of the National Middle School Association. They suggest that we use this checklist to review our program for its ability to meet the developmental needs of young adolescents. They also suggest that

we rate our school using a "point system" (0 = not at all, 2 = a little, 4 = some, 6 = extensively). We have adapted slightly the original checklist in exhibit 15.

EXHIBIT 15

MEETING DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

___ A positive climate of teacher-teacher, teacher-student, and student-student cooperation

___ A commitment to and a plan for dealing with the affective aspects of education

___ A curriculum that departs from the departmentalized subject/class arrangement for a large portion of the day

___ An extensive program of enrichment and exploratory activities

___ An activity/lab approach for much or most instruction

___ A developmental skill program that provides both separate and context teaching of reading and communication skills for **all** pupils

___ A developmental guidance program built on the classroom teacher as adviser and supplemented by guidance specialists

___ A comprehensive program of health and physical education

___ A recognition of the social needs of early adolescents through both in-class and out-of-class activities

___ Use of readily available and varied instructional materials

___ A comprehensive program of evaluation and reporting to parents

___ Use of the community as an education resource

___ **SUBTOTAL**

___ If the principal is not an enthusiastic, caring advocate for middle level education, subtract 20-30 points.

___ **TOTAL**

SOURCE: Adapted from Lounsburg 1984.

The Center for Early Adolescence (1984) has its own list of characteristics of a successful middle school drawn from the work of several middle school researchers. Such a school--

- o exhibits an unusual clarity of purpose.
- o adapts all practices to the individual differences in physical, cognitive, and social maturation.
- o holds high expectations of all students.

- emphasizes academics--especially reading and math--and carefully monitors
- offers many routes through which students can excel.
- is led by a principal with a driving vision.
- is marked by high levels of professionalism and collegiality.
- maintains an impressive level of caring and emphasis on the school as a community.
- provides opportunities for students.
- unites students and adults and bonds them to the school and its goals.
- establishes community connections that enrich the curriculum.
- refuses to accept the dichotomy that schools can be either caring, warm environments or strict, orderly places that stress academics.

The National Middle School Association (1982) identifies 10 essential elements of a "true" middle school: staff is knowledgeable about and committed to young adolescents, the curriculum--based on development needs--is balanced, organizational arrangement are varied, instructional strategies also are varied, a full exploratory program is evident, comprehensive counseling and advising is provided, students progress continuously, evaluation procedures are compatible with the nature of the young adolescents, cooperative planning is evident, and the school climate is positive.

The National Association of Secondary School Principal's Council on Middle Level Education (n.d.) describes 12 dimensions necessary for middle school excellence. In brief, the dimensions are existence of core values, proper culture and climate, focus on student development, a balanced curriculum, quality learning and instruction, effective school organization, use of technology, quality teachers, focus on transition (and articulation), strong leadership from the principal, connections with the community, and client centeredness.

The following listing of effective characteristics also is adapted from the work of the Massachusetts Advocacy Center (Wheelock 1986b). This list focuses on dropout prevention. The reason for its inclusion at this point is to illustrate the proximity of the two sets of recommendations: for middle school excellence and for dropout prevention. The recommended dropout prevention strategies are as follows:

- Focus primarily on changing practices and policies that put students at-risk.
- Focus on broadening and diversifying opportunities so that students with a variety of learning needs can experience success.
- Involve teachers, parents, students, administrative staff and community workers in meaningful roles.
- Take into account the normal developmental needs of young adolescents.

- o Acknowledge the broad cultural diversity of the student population (if applicable).

- o Collaborate with community-based, human service agencies to provide services for at-risk students and expand programs to all students.

Obviously no single model for success exists. Schools--like the students who attend them and the teachers who staff them--forge their own individuality. Yet, we know that they must have an inordinately clear vision about the possibilities of educating all young adolescents. Clearly an effective middle school is also the most effective dropout prevention strategy.

School improvement then becomes an appropriate focus and can begin by conducting a thorough assessment of a school's responsiveness to the academic and developmental needs of students. The Middle Grades Assessment Program (MGAP) is a participatory, building-based process that attempts to inspire and engender school improvement. MGAP is designed to be conducted as a school-based self-assessment. An assessment team comprised primarily of staff and parents from a school uses MGAP to produce a comprehensive report on the current status of the school and an action plan for improvement at the building level. MGAP also can be adapted for other uses, such as district-wide assessment and planning for middle grade schools. The intended purpose is to provide an information base, assessment instruments, and a participatory process for an individual middle or junior high schools to assess and improve itself.

MGAP consists of a *User's Manual*, a slide-tape presentation, and *Leader's Manual*. The *User's Manual* includes observation items and interview questions that help the users relate the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs of young adolescents to the school environment. The slide presentation illustrates adolescent development and explains the assessment program. The *Leader's Manual* presents suggestions for preparing to conduct a comprehensive assessment, techniques for training assessment team members in the use of the observation and interview forms, techniques for leading the assessment team to share and summarize their information, and aids for preparing an assessment report and school improvement plan. For more information contact The Center for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Suite 223, Carr Mill Mall, Carrboro, North Carolina 27510.

In summary, the list in exhibit 16 has been devised as a review of important program components for dropout prevention. The list does not attempt to summarize all previous suggestions nor is it intended to be comprehensive. Instead, it can be used as a tool to promote discussion, as a presentation to demonstrate the diversity of choices available, and as a framework of ideas upon which local educators can add ideas and strategies of their own.

EXHIBIT 16

DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Bonding

- Advisory committees
- Attendance improvement projects
- Attendance/truancy committees
- Business/industry/labor collaboration
- Climate supportive for different individual needs and abilities
- Community orientation
- Community outreach activities
- Community resources identified and utilized
- Community service projects
- Disciplinary alternatives
- Home visits by teachers and counselors
- Linkages with high school that students are likely to attend
- Orientation to school
- Parental involvement in child's attendance and homework activities
- Partnerships with nonschool agencies
- Record keeping accurately verifying student progress

The Basics

- Academic acceleration
- Activities tied to the real world--work, daily living, interpersonal relationships
- Alternative curriculum or classes
- Balanced curriculum of basic/core subjects and high-interest exploratory courses
- Basic skills instruction related to real world experiences--individualized and intensive
- "Block" programs--consecutive instructional periods, followed by work, career education, counseling activities, or community activities
- Career education activities
- Class size reduction
- Community-based evening tutorial and homework assistance programs, community based learning activities
- Community-volunteer involvement in classroom
- Competency-based promotion
- Computer-assisted instruction
- Cooperative learning
- Curriculum integration
- Encouragement for girls to enroll in math, science, and other nontraditional courses
- Expectations--academic and behavioral--clearly communicated
- Experimental learning activities
- Extracurricular activities
- Flexible school schedules and hours
- General education programs integrated with dropout prevention programs
- Integration of vocational experiences with core subjects
- Individualized and personalized instruction

EXHIBIT 16 -continued

- Clearly defined learning outcomes
- Low student-teacher ratios
- Microcomputers for drill and practice in individualized learning
- Orientation to the broader world of work outside of school
- Peer tutoring
- Physical activities in noncompetitive physical education programs
- Self-paced progress through the curriculum
- Small-group learning activities fostering appropriate group behavior
- Specific educational plans--similar to IEPs
- Summer learning programs
- Teaching methods varied
- Team teaching
- Time-on-task for repeated practice
- Work-related activities
- Vocational programs

Youth Advocacy

- Adolescent development principles are the foundation of the program
- Adopt-a-student activities
- Advisement and counseling
- Affective domain part of the school's concern
- Assessment of needs by identifying local reasons students drop out
- Coordinated activities of teachers, counselors, principals, and other support staff
- Decision-making activities
- Drug and alcohol abuse counseling
- Early diagnosis and intervention
- Environment--personal, informal, nonoppressive
- Expectations of success combined with caring for students
- Goal attainment activities (short-term attainable goals)
- Guidance an integral part of dropout prevention
- Health screening
- High standards and expectations in a supportive atmosphere
- Identification of developmental needs of at-risk youth
- Needs assessment activities
- Peer counseling programs
- Peer resource centers--classrooms set aside for "dropping in"
- Personal relationships and rapport with individual students
- Referral systems
- Rewards and praise generous but honest
- Role models positive
- Self-awareness activities
- Self-concept and sense of worth; self-esteem enhancement at every opportunity
- Sex education--pregnancy prevention, parenting courses
- Short-term goals, immediate feedback, and positive reinforcement
- Specialized staff with counseling or specialized training background
- Training for peer tutors and counselors

EXHIBIT 16--continued

Planning and Evaluation

- Alternative administrative/organizational/instructional arrangements
- Articulation: planned linkages with both elementary and high schools
- Comprehensive services
- Data collection system for dropouts and high-risk students
- Evaluation information incorporated into system
- Follow-up activities
- Participatory decision making by staff in program governance
- Program goals carefully monitored
- Positive staff/administration relations
- Public awareness and information program
- Recognition for outstanding instruction
- Reduced teacher workloads
- Retention-supervisor to review records for early identification
- Social worker/counselor on site
- Special education programs
- Staff committed to philosophy and goals of the program
- Staff development programs (e.g., classroom management, interpersonal and counseling skills, family intervention skills)
- Strong administrative support for the program, students, and teachers
- System for identifying and following progress of dropout-prone students

Clearly, no one strategy will solve the dropout problem as no student drops out for just one reason. Yet, it is imperative for the further economic--and ethical--development of our nation that we, as a nation, solve this problem. The nature of specific reasons for dropping out vary from area to area and from person to person and the most effective strategies will be tailored to local need as well as the personal needs of each student. Although the choices are many for developing effective dropout programs, one choice is not available to us--we cannot select to ignore the problem.

Discussion Items

1. What additional planning steps do we need to consider? What should the planning process include in our situation?
2. Respond to these critical planning questions: Where do we stand? What is the problem? Where do we want to go? How will we get there? Who will do it and when? How will we know if we have succeeded?
3. What specific evaluation techniques should we consider? And which of the "guiding principles" of evaluation are most relevant?
4. Which of the evaluation criteria--and performance indicators--are most relevant to our situation?

5. How do we respond to the four major formative evaluation questions: Who should be responsible for gathering formative evaluation/implementation data? What types of formative information will be needed? When will the information be obtained? Who will receive the results of our formative evaluation?
6. What should be our approach to summative evaluation? What are the appropriate evaluation instruments we need to use--or develop?
7. What staffing patterns should we consider?
8. Who should be primarily responsible for the delivery of our dropout prevention strategies? one person? a team approach? other approaches?
9. What staff development programs should we consider?
10. What can administrators do to plan and implement dropout prevention programs?
11. How do we judge the degree of proximity between our middle or junior high school programs and our dropout prevention strategies?
12. How can we improve our middle and junior high schools?
13. Where do we go from here? What do we need to do tomorrow or better yet--today?
14. What are our choices?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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APPENDIX B

RESOURCE GROUPS

Numerous resource groups exist that could be of tremendous help to middle and junior high school teachers. Each of the groups listed below have lengthy publication lists, many of which include documents on at-risk and dropout-prone students.

Center for Early Adolescence
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Suite 223, Carr Mill Mall
Carrboro, NC 27510

National Association of Secondary School Principals
1904 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

National Middle School Association
P.O. Box 14882
Columbus, OH 43214

National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education
College of Education
University of South Florida
Tampa, FL 33620

Educational Leadership Institute
Box 863
Springfield, MA 01101

(The Institute's publications include the *Dissemination Services on the Middle Grades* and *Transescence*, the journal on emerging adolescent education.)

In this discussion, we also repeatedly referred to the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS) and to several of their member groups. The following are names and addresses of these organizations:

National Coalition of Advocates
for Students
100 Boylston Street, Suite 737
Boston, MA 02116

NCAS Member Organizations

Advocates for Children of New York
24-16 Bridge Plaza South
Long Island City, NY 11101

Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families
931 Donaghey Building
Little Rock, AR 72201

ASPIRA Institute for Policy Research
1112 16th Street, NW, Suite 2900
Washington, DC 20036

Atlantic Center for Research in Education
604 West Chapel Hill Street
Durham, NC 27701

California Tomorrow
Fort Mason Center
Building B
San Francisco, CA 94123

Center for Law and Education
236 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Room 510
Washington, DC 20002

Children's Defense Fund
122 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Children's Defense Fund
Mississippi Project
Box 1684
Jackson, MS 39205

Citizen's Council for Ohio Schools
P.O. Box 99410
Cleveland, OH 44199

Citizens Education Center Northwest
105 South Main Street
Seattle, WA 98104

Coalition for Quality Education
1702 Uptown Avenue
Toledo, OH 43620

Designs for Change
220 South State Street
Chicago, IL 60604

Education Law Center, Inc.
225 South 15th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Education Law Center, Inc.
155 Washington Street, Room 209
Newark, NJ 07102

Institute for Citizen Involvement in Education
10 Seminary Place, Room 19
New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Intercultural Development and Research Association
5835 Callagham Road, #350
San Antonio, TX 78228

Kentucky Youth Advocates
2024 Woodford Place
Louisville, KY 40204

Massachusetts Advocacy Center
76 Summer Street, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02110

National Black Child Development Institute
1463 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20005

National Council of La Raza
548 South Spring Street, Suite 802
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Parents Union for Public Schools
401 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19108

Statewide Youth Advocacy, Inc.
426 Powers Building
Rochester, NY 14614

The Student Advocacy Center
617 East University, #226
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Western Service Systems
1410 Grand B104
Denver, CO 80203

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Targeted at the various individuals who have roles to play in a successful student retention effort, this series of six booklets and videocassette delineates the activities necessary to create a supportive team of adults to help students gain a diploma, job-entry skills, and options for further education. The Professional Set includes a single copy of each of the booklets and the videocassette.

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Designed to introduce decision-making and problem-solving techniques and to offer instruction in interpersonal life-management skills. The Professional Set includes the ***Instructor Guide*** and ***The Time of Choices*** videocassette as well as a complimentary copy of the consumable student workbook ***The Student's Choice.***

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SP700SC01	The Student's Choice (package of 10 copies) (Student Workbook)	$49.50

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Designed to heighten student's awareness of factors leading to dropping out and to help students consider their choices. The Professional Set includes ***It's Your Life . . . Take Charge*** videocassette with user's guide and a complimentary copy of ***It's Your Life . . . Take Charge*** student workbook.

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SP700TC02	Es Tu Vida . . . toma control (package of 10 copies) (Student Workbook in Spanish)	$19.50

ADMINISTRATOR MATERIALS

SP700DP01	A Guide for Dropout Prevention: Creating an Integrated Learning Environment in Secondary Schools	$13.25
SP700DP02	The School's Choice: Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School	$13.25

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